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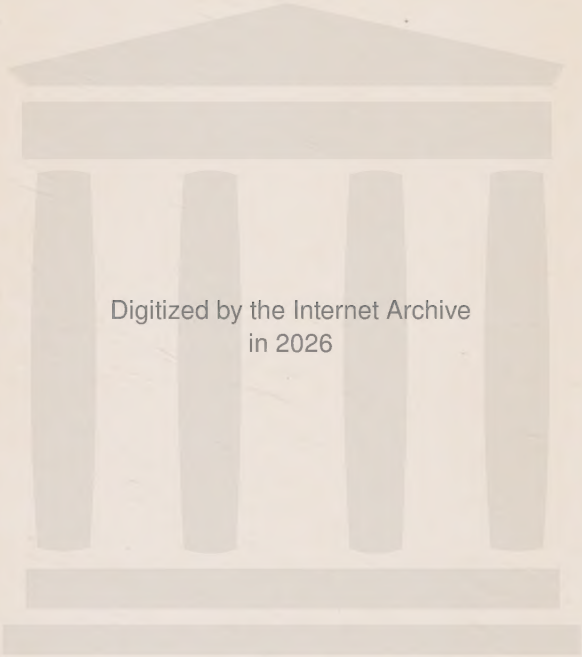
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# THE CHRISTIAN OUTLOOK IN THE MODERN WORLD

# THE CHRISTIAN OUTLOOK IN THE MODERN WORLD

*by*

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## PREFACE

DIODORUS SICULUS, in his account of Osymandyas of Egypt, who has been identified with the famous Rameses II, records that this great King made a library, and placed above it an inscription in the Egyptian tongue, which, rendered into Greek, became :

ΨΥΧΗΣΙΑΤΡΕΙΟΝ

(A Healing-Place for the Soul).

Here in Armagh, in the eighteenth century, a library was formed, and becomingly housed, by Richard Robinson, Lord Rokeby, Archbishop of Armagh and, after St. Patrick, our most notable benefactor. A lover of learning, and deeply interested in science and art, as his various endowments prove—having a mind which prized the consolations which flow to the spirit of man from the cultivation of its higher powers—he caused this most lovely of all inscriptions to be cut in the stone above the entrance to the reading-room.

We live in an age of restless searching, and there is a turning away from many of the older paths of thought. Yet the great mysteries of

our being have not lost their attraction. With deeper questioning than ever before, men are reflecting on God and human destiny ; and on the meaning of that amazing pageant of creation and of history which science is revealing with increasing clearness. In the presence of this immense revelation many an ancient dogmatism must be hushed into silence, and many a pretension to knowledge laid aside. Yet we dare not abandon the Faith which has nourished the best in human life, nor the Hope which, kindled by that Faith, has enhanced all human values for so many generations.

Viewing these most precious of our possessions in relation to the long vistas of knowledge now disclosed, we shall find, in the wide domains of thought thus opened to us, a great adventure of the spirit which will bring healing and renewal of strength.

Bishop Butler, in one of his most penetrating utterances, wrote that " the evidence of religion not appearing obvious, may constitute one particular part of some men's trial in the religious sense ; as it gives scope for a virtuous exercise, or vicious neglect, of their understanding, in examining or not examining into that evidence." The saying is an example of his extreme caution in the use of principles. For

surely the fact that, in every generation, thinking men have to face afresh the great problems of life, both speculative and practical, is an unfailing inspiration. As bodily exercise is needful for the growth of our physical powers, so, it may be truly said, are the stress and strain of mental struggle conditions requisite for the spiritual making of men.

ARMAGH, 1929.

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## CHAPTER I THE CHRISTIAN OUTLOOK

IT is part of man's heritage, as a thinking, desiring, willing, and imagining being, that he is never satisfied to rest in the present. There is within him an ever freshly awakened impulse towards something beyond his immediate experience.

> We look before and after
> And pine for what is not.

Or, in the still more magical language of the same poet, there is in us

> The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow.

Sometimes we turn our longing eyes to the past, to a remote golden age of which the tradition has come to us; sometimes we look on to an imagined splendour in the future; sometimes we dream of a possible higher order of things, a life which seems all the more desirable because unimagined, and only hoped for.

In the traditional mind of Christendom, we find a blending of the thoughts which turn to the past and those which turn to the future. The conception of a golden age in the past, which is found in pre-Christian classical literature, does not really fill much space in the Old Testament, though rabbinical expositors of later times delighted to enlarge upon the great endowments of Adam. It was the theology of later ages, with its emphasis on the Fall, which forced the idea of a primitive golden age, however brief, on the mind of the Christian generations. In the New Testament there is but little to encourage this idea ; yet it survived to modern times.

In our day a great change of outlook has taken place. We no longer look to the past as the scene of a perfect order. The scientific method as applied to the physical universe, to the history of life on the globe, and to the story of the human generations, has made it quite clear that there never was a golden age in the past. We find that man struggled upward, through many a fierce contest, and with many a fall, to that relatively high position among living creatures which he occupies to-day. In the earlier ages of his history, a being of dawning powers, he fought with wild beasts,

and barely held his own. In later times, when he had mastered the creatures of lower intelligence, he struggled with his fellows, tribe with tribe, nation with nation, and slowly built up what we call civilisation. Recent investigations have shown that human history is enormously longer than was formerly imagined. While man passed through the stages that are now named eolithic, palæolithic, and neolithic, many millenniums passed away.

We have learned, too, that, before the times which used to be regarded as the beginnings of civilisation, great human cultures, marked by striking artistic developments and no small degree of practical science, rose to eminence, fell, and passed away. Egypt, Babylonia, and Crete were centres of notable civilisations five thousand years ago, perhaps much earlier. Yet not in these can be discerned a golden age such as our hearts desire. Great as those old empires were, there was certainly in them a ruthlessness, a lust of power, an ethos less penetrated by kindliness than the social order of our day. There existed, indeed, within those civilisations some sense of order, of justice, and of regard for the welfare of others. Indications of such elements can be traced. But, compared with a modern civilised

State, they were certainly at a lower moral level.

As a result of this immense range of discovery the modern mind seeks its golden age in the future, not in the past. And it hopes to realise this golden age, not by miraculous interposition, nor by the coming of some great Divine Being ; but by the co-operation of all enlightened men and women, setting before themselves the common good, using all the resources of science, cultivating their sympathies with the needy and degraded, and applying all their powers of wisdom and knowledge. Medical science dealing with disease and unsanitary conditions of life ; economics dealing with the production and distribution of wealth ; physics adapting its discoveries to the problems of transport and communication—all these, and many more applications of science to the needs of life, will, it is hoped, bring about such a transformation of the conditions of human existence that a brighter, better, happier world will be the heritage of mankind.

Now, it would be quite unworthy on the part of any Christian believer to endeavour to dispel such a hope as this. A large view of the nature of Divine agency in human life should lead us to find a work of God in every effort which makes

for the improvement of the conditions of existence. Science is a great and wonderful gift of God. In itself it is a great enrichment of the human mind ; and, used for the benefit of mankind, it is one of the best of things. The fact that it can be made to supply instruments of destruction does not do away with its more beneficent services. But it is surely evident that scientific knowledge is like any other instrument : all depends on the way in which it is used. How is it to be rightly employed ?

It can hardly be denied that this is one of the most urgent questions of the age in which we live. For scientific knowledge and its application to life form the greatest and most characteristic possession of our age. Here is a resource of almost illimitable power. Here is an instrument whose uses are growing and developing so rapidly that it is almost impossible for the mind to keep pace with them. Wrongly used, science may bring disasters beyond all estimation : rightly used, it may open a veritable golden age, so far as all material conditions are concerned.

What is the key to this tremendous problem ? It must be affirmed with the strongest emphasis that the key can be found only in spiritual principles. Just as, in every true work of man, the mind must direct the hand, the purpose in

view must dominate; so here, what is needed is a purpose, an aim, worthy of so vast, so world-wide an undertaking. Let us set out clearly the immediate aims which will be generally accepted as worthy, so far as they go.

(1) The relief of suffering and the improvement of the health of the whole community—the application of medical and sanitary science.

(2) The provision of houses and generally of good and pleasing conditions in the circumstances of life, for all.

(3) Education, so as not merely to fit the average man or woman for the work of life, but also to create interests which will add to the fullness and enjoyment of life.

(4) To order the conditions of work in such a manner that everyone will have sufficient leisure and sufficient emolument for such pleasures and amusements as will make for social happiness.

(5) To provide for old age, sickness, and accidental causes of suffering.

(6) To give to everyone opportunity to win some of the greater prizes, if he has the power. In other words, to secure freedom for individual development.

All these aims have been kept in view, more or less perfectly, by those who guide public opinion, and much has been done to realise

them: also it seems clear that, as the movements which are now progressing develop, much more will be done in these directions.

But suppose these aims as fully realised as possible, and a happy, comfortable world to result, in which everybody has enough to eat, pleasant surroundings, leisure, and enjoyment—can we believe that the golden age has dawned at last upon the world, that mankind has reached the pinnacle of happiness?

When we look back through history to find some parallel to our modern world, we inevitably turn to the great age of Græco-Roman antiquity. Gibbon and other students whose opinion is of weight have fixed upon the age of the Antonines as the happiest period in the whole experience of mankind. The civilised world was a very splendid place in those days. Noble art, great literature, profound philosophies, supplied interest without end to thoughtful minds. The mass of mankind within the Roman Empire was probably, on the whole, better off than the mass of men in the same area to-day. Slavery, indeed, formed the basis of society, but it was not as degraded a form of slavery as that which existed in quite modern times. The writings of Marcus Aurelius show to how great an elevation the nobler spirits of that age could rise. Yet

there was some feeling of weariness, as if all that man could accomplish had been done, and the result was unsatisfying.

Let us turn to a somewhat earlier period, when Greek civilisation had attained to its greatest extension, and had covered the whole world of the Near East with magnificent cities in which art, literature, and philosophy were studied with enthusiasm. In this period Alexandria was the centre of cultivation. Its great library was considered the most splendid of the age.

As a characteristic figure of this period, I take Eratosthenes, librarian there in the latter part of the third century B.C. He was the wonder of his age, on account of the range and diversity of his attainments. Poet, grammarian, historian, philosopher, the greatest achievements of Eratosthenes were in geography and astronomy. He was certainly the founder of scientific geography, and, in the pursuit of this science, struck out some of the fundamental ideas of geology. But his most remarkable discoveries were in astronomy. He invented the method by which the magnitude of the earth has since been calculated by means of the more accurate instruments and measurements of modern science. His own measurement of the

circumference of the globe is astonishingly near the truth. He also measured the distance of the sun from the earth, and again attained a result closely resembling, in the degree of its magnitude, the measurements of modern astronomy. He knew the earth to be a sphere suspended in space, and that the sun is vastly larger than the earth, and so far away that its rays, falling on different parts of the globe, may be regarded as parallel. Many other notable achievements in science stand to the credit of Eratosthenes.

When we think of a mind so far in advance of his age, and possessing such a wealth of interests, we might imagine that, for him, life could never become stale and unprofitable. Yet it is recorded of Eratosthenes that at the age of eighty, having lost his sight, he ended his life by voluntary starvation. This was no hasty act. It was the deliberate decision of a strong mind.

Why, we may well ask, did a mind possessed of such resources find it preferable to end its existence than to live out its full span, in spite of blindness and infirmity? It was surely because, having exhausted all the resources he found in life, and having no satisfying outlook beyond, he saw no reason to endure.

It is of the essence of the Christian Faith that

it gives to man a boundless hope. Within the scope of its outlook is the whole life of the individual here, the whole future of humanity in this world, and the life of the world to come. The great conception of the Kingdom of God which is central in our Lord's teaching covers all these. For the Kingdom, whatever it may be more particularly, is the Rule of God, in the heart and life of each, in human society as a whole, and in the glorious fulfilment of the regenerated universe.

It is this sublime hope which animates the New Testament in every part, which carries the crucified Saviour through His shame and agony to the "joy that was set before Him"; which inspires St. Paul with the conviction that neither death nor life, nor any power in this or another world, can separate the soul from " the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord " ; which enables the same Apostle to rise to his splendid conception of the Resurrection as the " clothing upon " our mortal nature of a higher life, so that " what is mortal " shall " be swallowed up of life."

The Christian Hope is such that it puts the highest possible value on the individual, on human society, and on the future beyond the grave. Let us think for a moment on each of

these separately. First, the individual : looking to God as his Father in Heaven, he must find a loving providence surrounding every part of his daily existence, using his powers for purposes higher than the common toil, and preparing him for a more perfect order in the world to come. Such a conviction must give life an inestimable value.

Secondly, the Christian Hope—being based on the love of God, and inspiring to that seeking of the Kingdom which our Lord presents as the supreme law of goodness—must work by love, and impel us to bring happiness into the social order in which we live. Just as every Christian home should be happy in the light of affection, an affection which makes for the welfare of each member, so the social order which feels the influence of Christian Faith and Hope should be one in which the good and the happiness of each are the aim of all.

Thirdly, there can, in the nature of things, be no higher hope for the future than that which is presented by Christian Faith. For it is a hope founded on the supreme revelation of God as Love. As our Lord teaches, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The God revealed in the teaching, life, and death of Jesus Christ is a Father who, possessed of

supreme power in the universe, cannot let His children pass out of existence. And the future existence which He has prepared for them must be a life of higher order than any we know here, for our experience of this world teaches that the life we have here is not capable of yielding a permanent satisfaction. It is essentially preparatory in all its conditions.

Thus are we led on to think of such a life as that implied in the teaching of St. Paul. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality . . . then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Here we observe the struggle to express in human language that which passes beyond human experience. Its meaning and value are just this: there results from the very nature of the Christian conception of God, and the facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of a future life to which this life shall be as dream to awakening, as shadow to substance, as twilight to the glory of noon.

## CHAPTER II FAITH IN GOD

THE Christian outlook is, as we have seen, the most precious of our spiritual possessions: it is that which most of all enhances the values of life and, in the highest sense, makes life worth living. And this great possession came to mankind as the outcome of a long series of spiritual experiences, crowned by the life and death of Jesus Christ and the teachings which emerged from those events. The very heart and soul of these teachings is faith in God. And not a bare faith in God, but in God as having a character which can best be expressed by the word "love." It is this special quality of Christian Faith which inspires the prayer "Our Father," and makes possible that essentially Christian conviction which enables the faithful soul to trust God to the uttermost, no matter what may be the pains and disappointments of earthly experience.

So it is that St. Paul teaches that here is the secret of a principle which makes life worth living no matter what happens. This is the

meaning of that splendid passage in his Epistle to the Romans where he cries out : " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long ; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This rapture of faith is fully justified if it be true that the word love, as it has been enriched and expanded by the best spiritual experience, is the truest description of the character of God. But here the mind of to-day finds itself confronted by that vast range of discovery and explanation which has spread out in its sight a strange and wonderful history of the universe from its dim beginnings in glowing star-mist, through the cooling of worlds, the shaping of continents and seas, the evolution of life, the millions of years during which higher forms appeared, to, finally, the coming

of man and his history, stained by lust and cruelty. Can such a series of events be regarded as justifying our faith in a Creative Power whose character is Love? It is to be feared that many thoughtful minds reply to that question either with an emphatic negative or with such suspense of judgment as makes a living faith impossible.

What we need here is to give to our thoughts the widest possible sweep. It is surely clear that the character of the Creative Power cannot be judged by any limited survey of the histories of individuals or of races. We must seek the fundamental principles of the creative process, if our minds can stretch so far. Some things seem clear. Not in any part or in any respect is the process of creation a series of merely mechanical adjustments. The mechanical method of explanation consists altogether of a set of principles constructed by the mind of abstractions which are arrived at by leaving out all elements in experience which will not fit into their framework. It is therefore inadequate from the start; and its very clearness and seeming completeness form the sure mark of its imperfection.

This truth has become startlingly evident through the emergence of Einstein's Doctrine

of Relativity. Einstein does not destroy the value of the old Newtonian system; he merely includes it in a wider system. Within its proper limits—the limits set by the abstractions on which it is founded—the Newtonian method of measuring the physical universe remains as valuable as ever. This fact Einstein frankly recognises. But Newton's mechanics are based on the supposition that space and time are absolute. This, Poincaré, Einstein, and others have refuted, and have shown that, on the supposition of their relativity, a wider and more comprehensive statement of the facts of the physical universe can be framed. Both systems are, in fact, methods of description and measurement constructed by the mind in its effort to comprehend the universe; but the universe, as a whole, passes, in its nature, beyond all such systems of description and measurement.

That the universe as a whole is too great and various in its nature and contents to be included in any material system, whether absolute or relative, is manifest from this, that no such system can include feelings, thoughts, wishes, and the other mental facts which are for us the most certain facts of all. There is, indeed, a new psychology, so-called, which endeavours to regard these facts as forms of material "behaviour."

But every such explanation must begin with a violent reversal of the order of experience; for it is clear that we must feel the prick of the thorn before we grasp it as a material source of trouble, we must enjoy the scent of the rose before we connect it with its material origin. The amazing richness and variety of the world of our experience is quite a sufficient proof that any explanation of it as a whole which is incapable of including those elements which we call mental, moral, spiritual must be rejected.

It is not possible to set forth here those philosophical arguments which lead to a spiritual doctrine of the origin and existence of the universe. More relevant to our immediate purpose is the witness of all the ages of human belief and reflection. It cannot be said, indeed, that everywhere and always there is to be found among men, in some shape or form, the belief in the existence of God. Buddhism, for example, in its more purely philosophical form, has no doctrine of God. But the evidence yielded by the study of comparative religion certainly proves that man, from a very early period in his history, formed ideas of spiritual forces at work behind the material processes of the world.

The primitive religious impulse seems to have been the tendency to find a mysterious potency

in persons and things. To this hidden power is attributed all forms of psychic energy : thought, memory, will. Out of this conviction spring the two main elements in primitive religion : belief in the existence and influence of spirits, and forms of ritual observance. Thus it is that savage peoples become animists. The world, for them, is haunted by unseen, conscious agencies, not necessarily human in form. Every remarkable feature of the landscape—the great mountain, the river, the ancient tree—is the habitation of a spirit. Every striking event or influence which affects his life, the storm or pestilence, every difficulty or trouble which he encounters in his contact with the material world, is, for the primitive man, in some undefined way, due to the agency of some spiritual power.

As primitive reflection advances, these ideas assume clearer outlines, and there emerges belief in a multitude of nature-spirits. In addition, primitive man has, as a rule, a profound conviction as to the continued existence of the departed. He does not think that the end of the bodily life involves also the ending of the human spirit. Recent investigation of the remains of the very early races of mankind seems to prove that the belief in existence after

death began very soon in the development of human culture.

Usually the spirits are regarded as malignant, or, at all events, jealous. It is necessary to remember them, and consider carefully their desires and dislikes. Their hostility must be guarded against. Hence follow all sorts of rites and observances which mimic the respect which is paid to important men. The apprehension of the spirit-world overshadows, like a black cloud, the whole of savage life. None can tell when some spirit who has been offended by injury or neglect may take vengeance for the affront. Life is beset with unseen perils.

Professor Otto, in his remarkable work, *The Idea of the Holy*, regards the principle which lies behind all this—which he terms the idea of the "numinous"—as an element which belongs to the fundamental structure of the human mind. He compares it with those necessary forms of thought which Kant regarded as belonging to the very possibility of our experience as apprehended by the mind. Apart from any such philosophical account of it, the fact remains.

It is easy to see that we have here, very clearly indicated, the origin of pagan religions. As thought rises to higher levels, the world of petty, spiteful spirits is replaced by a hierarchy of

nature-gods, terrible or beautiful, who are regarded as possessing superhuman powers, who are more or less interested in the doings of men, and of whom therefore account must be taken in human affairs. It has often been pointed out that underneath all polytheistic faiths may be detected a substratum of animism. Even so highly developed and philosophical a creed as Buddhism scarcely conceals the surviving animistic beliefs of the majority of its unlearned votaries. In Burma, for example, the most completely Buddhist country in the world, the dominant religion is but a thin veil spread over the primitive animism.

Out of this animism there arose those religions which impressed their character on such great peoples as those of Egypt, Greece, Rome, and India. In these we find gods of the sun and of the moon, of earth and ocean, hero-gods, animal gods, fertility gods—a vast pantheon of deities of various grades of importance and power. A wide survey of such creeds reveals the fact that any part or aspect of human experience, any department of life or quality of character, might come to be represented by a corresponding deity. We cannot therefore be surprised to find that the organisation of human society is reproduced among the gods ; and as kingly rule

was established over great nations and territories, it became inevitable that great sovereign deities should receive recognition. Thus Zeus, Jupiter, Odin emerged. Thus also we find tribal and national gods, such as Bel and Marduk. Also in the city-states, whether monarchical or republican, were reverenced deities who—like Athena at Athens, or Serapis at Alexandria —represented the genius of the community.

The great polytheistic creeds are not the hateful and contemptible things that Christian zeal is so apt to imagine. To an impartial and reasonable survey they will appear with a character which is eminently intelligible. The world is full of differences and oppositions, of conflicting agencies and influences: good and evil, light and darkness, pleasure and pain, health and disease, love and hatred, war and peace. How natural for those who started with the animistic habit of mind to regard all these opposing elements as the spheres of the activities of diverse spiritual powers. Further, polytheistic creeds yield to the imagination an amazing wealth of imagery, in which all the interplay of human passions and interests is exalted to a more splendid stage. Therefore these creeds yield a rich, and often beautiful, world of mythology. Who that has read Homer

can doubt the inspiration which came to the poet when he contemplated a world peopled with gods and heroes, like men and women in their feelings and adventures, but greater, more splendid, more worthy to be sung? Or, consider the great and magnificent creations of art which these creeds have bequeathed to mankind. The architecture and sculpture of Egypt and of Greece are unsurpassed in splendour of imagination and perfection of workmanship. And it is strange to reflect that, during the long centuries of the Christian ages, painting and sculpture, while rising at times to heights of devotional expression, failed to attain their greatest perfection until the inspiration which came from the old pagan past at the time of the Renaissance. The museum of the Vatican and the wonderful galleries of Florence provide ample witness to this truth. As Thomas Aquinas studied at the feet of Aristotle, as Dante learned from Virgil, so did Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Titian find their inspiration in the remains of the ancient art.

The net result of this rapid survey is that the spiritual interpretation of nature, beginning, though it did, in all the crudeness and savagery of primitive animism, is yet the source of all that is most splendid in human achievement.

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As the temples of the gods in Egypt and Greece surpassed in beauty all other buildings; as the cathedrals of the Middle Ages are more gracious and lovable than the castles; and as art and literature in all their forms have a peculiar charm when they are illuminated by that insight into human life which may well be called spiritual, whether it be distinctively religious or not; so surely does it appear that a materialistic view of the world must, if it should prevail, deprive mankind of all that hitherto has endowed our life with its wealth of imaginative charm and beauty.

So far we have traced the progress of the spiritual interpretation of the world, as it has actually taken place on the wide stage of religious experience, from its dim beginnings in primitive animism to its blossoming in the richer forms of polytheistic faiths. Now we must consider the transition to monotheism. We have seen that polytheism arises reasonably out of animism, and commends itself to minds that have been accustomed to observe the various and often discordant elements in nature, and to trace them to spiritual agencies. From this point of view monotheism is a very difficult creed. How is it possible to believe in one sole supreme universal Deity, when the world

is so full of antagonisms, and we can point to no conspicuous overruling unity capable of bringing them all into harmony? Yet monotheism appeared, and achieved, within certain limits, a very wonderful victory.

The Old Testament gives the record of the triumph of monotheism. But it is not there only that we must seek for its history. Greece, Persia, Chaldea, India, China, and Japan can all claim some share in this great revelation. In the great age of Greek thought there were minds which were able to rise to the conception of the Supreme One, a Being essentially One though expressed by many names. Indian monotheism, as modern investigations have disclosed, can be traced through a history of thousands of years.[1] In China and Japan, under the veil of Buddhism, Amida-worship has become the vehicle of a faith which is, in essence, monotheistic. Amida, who is styled the true Buddha, is worshipped as the One Supreme Being, whose chief character is mercy, and who, through incarnation and sacrifice, accomplished man's salvation. Faith in him brings deliverance to the believer and secures eternal happiness.[2] Yet it must be admitted

[1] See Sir G. Grierson's article "Bhakti-marga" in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, and MacNicol's *Indian Theism*.

[2] See Arthur Lloyd, *The Creed of Half Japan*.

that in these creeds monotheism is maintained with difficulty; and in India and China there is a probability of Christian influence in the later developments.

Only along the lines of that great spiritual progress recorded in the Old Testament can we find the true revelation and the definite triumph of monotheistic faith. Yet it was through hard struggle that victory came. The history of Israel under the Kings shows how often the heathenism of the surrounding peoples was on the point of overwhelming, like a flood, the purer faith. In Israel, as in other ancient nations, belief in the national God led to the polytheistic conception of a multitude of deities corresponding to the multiplicity of the nations. Each stood for the genius and destiny of his own people. The religious history of Israel is, in the main, the history of how the God of the nation came to be recognised as the God of the universe. And it is a very wonderful thing that a small people occupying a little borderland between the great empires of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia were able, under the guidance of their spiritual leaders, to rise to their pure monotheistic faith in the midst of antagonistic influences which must have been almost crushing in their power.

The prophets of Israel were the leaders who preached the true faith, denounced idolatry, and asserted the supremacy of Jehovah, the only true God, over all things in heaven and earth, over nature and over history. In the prophecies of Amos we find Jehovah's sovereignty over all kings and peoples implied from the beginning. We find Him punishing them for their unrighteous deeds against one another, and we are directed to see His providence in the movements of the nations, and not only in His dealings with Israel. In Isaiah the same teaching is found, and presented even more plainly and forcibly. The "God of Jacob" judges between the nations, and reproves many peoples. The Lord alone is exalted, and the idols shall utterly pass away. And in the later Isaiah the glorious creative power and supreme rule of Jehovah are described with magnificent eloquence, and the vanity of idol-worship is exposed with keen, remorseless satire. The message of the prophet, speaking in the name of God, is, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else." Out of the labours of the prophets, as the messengers of God and the interpreters of the experiences of the Hebrew race, and out of the terribly severe discipline

through which that race passed, emerged an immovable conviction in the great creed expressed by the words, " Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." From Israel the monotheistic faith passed to Christianity and to Islam, and so became the possession of the modern world.

There is another side to this development which is of almost equal importance. There is a corresponding moral advance. Monotheism is essentially an ethical creed. Animism and polytheism, with their recognition of the divinity of the diverse elements in the world, whether good or evil, can never attain to a high moral level. Pantheism is in a similar position. If good and evil are alike Divine, why should one be preferred to the other? In perfect accordance with this is the fact that, among pagan peoples, religion and morality are but loosely connected. Among the ancient Greeks and Romans morality was, in the main, regarded as the cement of social life. Duty to the State made men become moral heroes. A deeper insight is certainly to be found in certain splendid passages in the Greek tragedies and in the nobler teachings of philosophy. For cultured minds, philosophy took the place that religious faith occupied later. In the East

to-day, the higher morality springs out of Buddhism and other philosophic creeds.

Monotheism unites religion with morality. So it was in the religion of Israel. So it must ever be, because if God is One, and supreme over the universe, His will, and, on deeper reflection, His character, become the standard of personal life. And, with growing experience and clearer insight, the knowledge of God and the moral standard rise together. The human conscience, which, in its beginnings, is the mere apprehension that there is a distinction between good and evil, between right and wrong, gains enlightenment: it acquires a larger grasp of the details and circumstances of life, marking out whole departments of conduct as good or evil, acquiring more and more a peculiar sensitiveness to moral differences, and, in the light of monotheistic faith, it identifies all good with the whole meaning and plan of the universe, and turns from evil as that which is subversive of the universal purpose. It is monotheism which enables us to speak of conscience as the voice of God.[1]

[1] On the imperfection of Mohammedan monotheism, see Jevons's *Comparative Religion*, pp. 133, 134.

## CHAPTER III THE OLD TESTAMENT

WE have already touched upon the work of the prophets of Israel in shaping the great monotheistic faith which supplanted the ancient polytheism. But this, though central in the teaching of the Old Testament, is not the whole. We find, also, in the sacred literature of Israel an account of beginnings and of the early history of mankind which, for nearly all the Christian centuries, was regarded as not only historical, but strictly accurate from the scientific point of view. In our time, the discoveries of astronomy, geology, biology, archæology, and a host of other sciences have yielded a history of the world which makes it impossible for the educated man of to-day to accept this view. How, then, are we to regard these Hebrew accounts? Are they merely mythical, like the fables of Babylonia and Greece?

It seems to the writer that these accounts have an intrinsic quality which sets them apart from the myths of other peoples. They have a moral and religious value which no criticism

can take away. Let us first consider what they are not. They are certainly not history in the modern sense—a plain account of events from the human and natural point of view. The religious intention which is everywhere manifest in them is, of itself, sufficient to distinguish them from the work of the modern historian. Secondly, though the accounts in Genesis deal with the origin of the world and the early history of mankind, they contain no personification of the forces of nature such as is found in the parallel stories of the Babylonian mythology, and in all mythologies. Lastly, they are not scientific, in the modern sense. To look upon them as revealing the method of creation, and the course of events in the earliest times as a succession of matters of fact linked by intelligible causes, is to misconceive the whole nature and manner of these documents.

On the contrary, what we have in the book of Genesis is a series of pictures viewing the world, in its origin and earlier periods, in relation to God and the moral life of man. These pictures take up into themselves, most manifestly, names and accounts which belong to the early Semitic traditions, giving—as such traditions often do—material and circumstantial details which impart a peculiar vividness to the

narrative. Such are the ages of the antediluvians, the measurements of the Ark, the period of the Flood. But all such details are merely imagery: they add nothing to the spiritual value of the pictures.

Nearly all the trouble which has arisen from the reaction of scientific knowledge upon this early Biblical literature is due to the fact that people are not content to regard the Bible as a teacher of religion. They want to use it as a teacher of science. The traditions of the Church are, no doubt, largely responsible for this. It is time for the Church to change her methods. She would no longer condemn Galileo; but there are many, even now, who denounce Darwin, and there are those who think the whole idea of evolution fatal to the Christian ideas of God and the world.

We escape these troubles if we use the Bible as the great teacher of religion, refusing to use it as a text-book of science. But we must also remember that the Bible is a whole literature, and not just one book. There is indeed a very wonderful and all-pervading unity, a unity of spirit and purpose, running throughout the whole. Yet, withal, the character and value of the writings which form its contents are very various. Further, it must be remembered that

the revelation which the Bible contains is progressive. Only very slowly has this truth dawned on the minds of Christian people. There was a time when the popular preacher tried to find the whole Gospel in every text of Leviticus. That way of interpretation is happily past. Yet how few even yet seem to realise that the progressive nature of revelation is an essential principle in our Lord's own teaching. How else can we explain the expositions in the Sermon on the Mount and the promise of the Spirit to guide into all truth? How else can we understand His teaching on the Sabbath, and his prophecy of the abolition of the central worship at Jerusalem? One great purpose of His mission was to lead mankind on from a lower stage of spiritual experience to a higher stage. His attitude to life was essentially that of one who believed in the progressive attainment of truth.

All this is summed up in the great saying with which the Epistle to the Hebrews opens: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." The phrase "in sundry times and in divers manners" may be more accurately rendered "in many parts and in many ways." It describes the Divine education

of mankind. God does not teach man by a sudden revelation of the whole truth, but step by step, as man is able to receive it. And not only "in many parts," but also "in many ways": by the vivid imagery of the story of the Creation and Fall of Man, by the moral discipline of the chosen people, by the ministry of the prophets sent to Israel at critical epochs in their history, and finally by the advent of Jesus Christ, His ministry, His teaching, His suffering, His death, His resurrection. Nor does the instruction stop there; for the Spirit of God guides the thoughts of men and leads them, as one spiritual experience follows another, to ever higher views of truth.

The early chapters of Genesis have been for a long time a battlefield of controversy. Here apologists have exhausted their ingenuity, and it cannot be said that their labours have yielded any very satisfactory result. But suppose that, instead of asking the question, Are these chapters historical? we follow out the principles at which we have just arrived, and ask, What is the truth that they teach? We ought then to be able to test the value of those principles. It is evident, surely, that in asking the latter question we are on a level on which enquiry may hope to attain some definite result; for the answer must

be one that our intelligence and our conscience can judge of. If this part of the Bible is found to teach the great fundamentals, the truths on which all religious experience rests, then its position in Divine revelation is fully justified, its *truth* is established.

Take, as the first example, the story of creation. It is a magnificent vision of the whole order of the natural world regarded in various stages, and all traced to the creative will of God. Efforts have been made to prove that the order of the stages of creation correspond exactly with that revealed by modern science. It cannot be said that these efforts have been successful. But this fact is of no material consequence. The question at issue is one for science, and not for religion. The essential point is that creation in all its stages is regarded as progressive, and is traced throughout to the One sole creative activity. The account tells of God, and of the great process of creation ascending to its crowning point in man—man with his higher powers, something God-like, the image of God in him. There is the religious teaching, and it is the foundation of all our Faith.

Take again the story of the Fall of Man, in the third chapter of Genesis. It is sometimes

said that the scientific doctrine of evolution is inconsistent with the very idea of a Fall, that man's course has been upward, not downward. But those who reason in this way forget that " upward " and " downward " are terms relative to any given stage in development. There was a rise which was followed by a fall. Look at the question in the light of our moral experience. Bring it to the test of conscience. The power of choice between good and evil is the foundation of our moral life. It is a universal human experience that this power is never perfectly used for ends which are wholly good. When conscience is awakened, there is always the revelation of a great fact, the fact of sin. The moral discord, deep in the heart of man, is realised. The conflict which St. Paul discusses in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans rises into consciousness. Man knows himself a sinner ; and sees with perfect clearness that in himself there is no moral wholeness. That is the Fall realised as a fact.

This great human experience must arise out of the primitive experiences of the race. The Fall which affects every human soul to-day must be traced to a Fall far back in the depths of time. And the elements of that primitive fault in human life and character must be, in

essence, similar to those which can be discerned in the sins of to-day. This is the truth so vividly set forth in the Book of Genesis. There, in the wonderful old story of the Fall of Man, we see the elements of temptation, of the sinful act, and of the conviction of sin, exhibited in concrete form with extraordinary force and simplicity. There are shown the awakening of the mind to the fact of the forbidden, the suggestion of evil, the confident assertion of the tempter, the lust of the eyes, the longing for more experience of life, the plunge into sin, the reaction, the sense of guilt, and the awful awakening when the soul finds itself in the presence of God. There also is shown the partnership of human souls in sin, the truth that the sinner becomes a tempter, and that out of the sinful partnership springs division, and out of the sin come sorrow and separation from God.

Here are the fundamental truths of man's experience of sin and remorse, presented in a form which can express those truths for all generations of human existence. When this becomes evident, it is a mere irrelevance to ask, Is the story of the Fall historical? The fact is that we are dealing here with a presentation of truth which is all the truer because it could not possibly be history in the modern

sense of the term. It may be justly said that the expression of the inner spiritual essence of man's life needs, at every stage of human culture, a language, a medium, which must draw upon the imaginative resources of the æsthetic powers of the mind for its form, its mode of presentation. This language must always be imagery. Inevitably the imagery will arise out of the store of traditional shapes in which the growing conceptions of a people have clothed themselves. The early narratives of Genesis are full of such imagery. And it is worthy of note that no modern interpretation, no matter how it may claim to regard these accounts as historical, can take them quite literally. For example, there is nothing about "the Devil" as tempter. The tempter is the serpent, and his tempting is due to the fact that he "was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord had made." Also, the punishment which is inflicted on him is that he is "cursed above every beast of the field," and the Divine decree is, "upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." It is obvious that here we have a primitive imagery taken into the service of moral teaching. The language used is that which belongs to a very early age: the lesson

taught is for all ages. It may well be said that, however literalists may protest, at no period in the history of Christian exposition was it found possible to regard the imagery of this narrative as plain matter of fact.[1]

Are we, then, committed to the allegorical method of interpretation?

The history of this method forms a most interesting chapter in the records of man's spiritual development. Long before the Christian era, the Greek thinkers of the great age found themselves embarrassed by the difficulties which beset their studies in view of the traditional reverence for Homer, and generally for the stories of the Greek mythology. The ideas of the gods contained in these accounts were obviously impossible to cultivated minds in a period marked by philosophical thinking. Even in the sixth century B.C. there were thinkers who refused to believe in the gods of Homer and Hesiod. Pythagoras, Xenophanes,

[1] Dr. N. P. Williams, in his learned work on *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin* (Bampton Lectures, 1924), finds two distinct accounts of the origin of sin in human life in the early chapters of Genesis, the Fall story of chapter iii., and the story of the Fallen Angels in chapter vi. He thinks that the former became the "official" account in the Christian Church because of St. Paul's teaching (Rom. v.–vii.; 1 Cor. xv., etc.). St. Paul's teaching certainly counted for a great deal. But Dr. Williams does not do justice to the extraordinary moral and spiritual values in Gen. iii. His own strange theory comes nearer to the ideas which he finds in Gen. vi.

and Heraclitus rejected the traditional religious ideas. In the following centuries can be traced side by side a scepticism which refused credence to the old gods and a movement which tried to keep the old faith by allegorising the myths.

It was, however, in the Jewish School of Alexandria that the allegorical method was fully developed. Philo was here the master. The Greeks of his day criticised the early chapters of Genesis in the manner of the modern sceptic. Philo's defence consisted in treating these narratives as allegories. The letter must be interpreted by the spirit. The persons and events are not matters of fact, they are principles. The Tree of Life is the Fear of God, the four rivers of Paradise are the cardinal virtues, Abel is piety, Cain is selfishness, and so on. The method of Philo was taken over by Christian writers. Origen and Clement of Alexandria led the way. In the traditional interpretation of Canticles, it has come down to our own time.[1]

To-day, it is impossible to adopt this method of explanation. And it is very far indeed from the purpose of the writer to follow this way of escape from difficulty. The spiritual value of

[1] See article "Allegory," by Geffcken, in Hastings's *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

a narrative is a wholly different thing from an allegorical meaning. This value is to be determined solely by the moral judgment. It does not depend upon any translation into abstract principles of the persons and things which are presented in the imagery. It discerns, rather, the moral and spiritual values which the imagery presents, however that imagery be regarded. So far as the meaning goes, it remains the same whether the account be treated as history or as a story drawing on primitive traditions for its persons and events.

As a further illustration, let us take the account of the creation of woman in the second chapter of Genesis. This strange story was always a stumbling-block to devout minds in times when the literal acceptation of these early narratives was insisted on. Regarded, however, as expressing the union of the sexes in the indissoluble bond of a monogamous marriage, its value is at once apparent. This is the interpretation put upon it by our Lord Himself. It is remarkable that not a word is recorded from which it might be inferred that He attached any value to the story of the sleep and the rib. In fact, the language as given in St. Matthew (xix. 4, 5, 6) and St. Mark (x. 7), "From the beginning of the creation God made them male

and female," seems to ignore this altogether, and to refer to Genesis i. 27, where the statement is simply, " God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them." What our Lord teaches is that the indissoluble marriage union is the will of God for man, and that, though, owing to human weakness, this great rule was not enforced by the law, it was the Divine intention from the beginning. In modern language, it is the ideal of marriage.

We gather, then, that the primitive narratives which were collected to form the book of Genesis are so presented that they form a medium for those moral and spiritual teachings which underlie the great monotheistic creed which is the main message of the Old Testament. This ancient literature is, from beginning to end, penetrated and informed by a truth so great and so vital that it subdues to itself all the traditions, convictions, and national hopes of Israel. The Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters and creates a thing unique in all literature. It gives a spiritual unity to the higher life and mind of the nation. When the baser beliefs of the idolatrous peoples around press in, the same mighty Spirit speaks through the lips of prophet after prophet, and the evil

is driven out. And then, out of the conception of the chosen people, there emerges the vision of a great blessing to come, and this blessing is identified with the thought of the Messiah. And so the way is prepared for the coming of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER IV MAN AND THE WORLD

THERE is a drawing of Blake's which is called "Despair." A wide expanse of ocean under a gloomy sky, and, rising above the waves, a solitary arm, with hand outstretched and grasping fingers. Nothing more. Looking on that picture, the mind reflects on the ceaseless tragedy of human life; and how, one by one, men slip from the raft of earthly existence, and, in spite of hands uplifted to heaven, are overwhelmed in the flood. Man struggles to maintain himself in security and comfort by mastering the forces of the material world, and, for a time, all seems to go well with him, but, sooner or later, those pitiless powers close in upon him, and he disappears, swallowed up in the vast universe. With every generation comes the fresh hope, and with every generation the fresh despair.

Wide generalisations are dangerous. But perhaps it may be said that all religions owe their existence and their value to the fact that they deal in some way or other with this supreme

human problem. From the primitive animism that discerns the action of spiritual powers in all the processes of nature up to Christianity in its purest forms, may be traced in some degree the strength and the solace which come to the soul of man from the conviction that in his struggle with the forces of nature he is dealing with something which is akin to himself, something, at least, which is not wholly alien to him and regardless of him.

And as with religion, so with philosophy. Human thought is never really satisfied until it is able, in some way or other, to find a spiritual interpretation of nature. If we can look up to the heavens and discern behind their stupendous mechanism the operation of supreme intelligence, or if we can reflect upon the age-long pageant of natural evolution and detect the working out of supreme purpose, we enjoy a satisfaction which makes the perpetual tragedy of human existence endurable. We are no longer crushed. We feel that our inner life of feeling, thought, and will is no mere transient phenomenon, destined to flicker out and disappear with the passing of the ages, but that we are allied with the highest and, in some way or other, share in its greatness. Having grasped this faith, we feel that we are at home in the

universe and believe that our spiritual life has some lasting value and significance.

These reflections open up all the tremendous problems of metaphysical enquiry. They lead us to those paths which conduct to all the vast wildernesses of speculation wherein seeking minds have wandered throughout the ages. We shall not attempt to follow them into those endless mazes. We shall confine our attention to certain very simple conclusions which may be drawn from our experiences in dealing with natural forces. These conclusions are of the most obvious kind and are within the knowledge of all. Yet they are constantly ignored or forgotten. Their plain meaning seems to be quite concealed from many thinkers of to-day whose theories should demand some consideration of them.

First, it is clear that, instead of being the helpless victim of natural forces, man has shown an extraordinary power to control them for his own purposes. The use of physical forces and the bending of them to supply the needs of his life is the very business of his daily existence and the characteristic sign of his elevation among created things. The most uncivilised savage is distinguished from other animals by his ability to take sticks and stones

and use them as instruments by which to effect certain definitely conceived purposes. How early in the history of the primitive races were the qualities of flint discovered and employed for important uses! It is strange to reflect that this substance, which proved itself the most valuable of all in the early ages, has remained among the most useful to our own times. For how many centuries was it the means of obtaining fire, and to-day it provides science with lenses and other glass implements of indispensable importance!

Then came the age of the metals, copper soon merging in the more useful bronze, followed by the age of iron and steel. And in our time has come the wonderful age of electricity, by which more than ever the forces of the natural world have been subdued to the uses of human life. And men of science are beginning to dream of a new era in which the gigantic forces locked up in the structure of the atoms, as we still call them, may be set free to provide unlimited supplies of power.

Thus the whole long career of the human race on earth reveals the gradual growth of man's power over natural forces. It is a record marked by immensely long periods of stagnation, or very slow progress, and in its later

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stages by sudden and amazing advances. More and more, as the history of human civilisation is followed, man's life reveals an ever-growing control of the forces which he finds in the world about him.

Secondly, science, as it develops, divides itself into two great branches—the theoretical and the practical. In its earliest stages, it must have been altogether practical. The primitive flint-worker thought of nothing but the production of a scraper or arrow-head which would serve its useful purpose as well as possible. But the theoretic purpose appears relatively early in the effort to give some artistic finish to the implement made in the first instance for use only. The earthenware pot, formed for obvious household purposes, and entirely useful in its first intention, came to be ornamented with orderly markings, and then shaped into graceful lines, and finally glazed and coloured, to satisfy a dawning sense of beauty. This æsthetic side of human activity is not just the same in quality as the theoretic side of science. But they share the attribute of being apart from mere utility. Each appeals to some capacity different in kind from the purely practical purpose of the man who simply demands an instrument to gain a material end. Indeed, it

might very well be contended that the delight which the modern man of science takes in knowledge for its own sake is essentially æsthetic.

We find, then, that, as science advances, it may be regarded in two ways—as theory and as practice. It may indeed be said to divide itself into two great branches, the theoretical and the practical. Historically, the practical came before the theoretical; but, with the growth of knowledge, theory and practice changed places. The discovery of how effect follows cause in the natural world now comes first. The application of this knowledge to the uses of life comes afterwards. First, we have to find out how things happen, and then to use our discoveries in order to effect our purposes.

But now a strange thing has occurred. The word science has come, for most of those who devote their lives to it, to be applied in a special way to the knowledge which has been acquired, almost to the exclusion of the practical applications. And, indeed, that is the very meaning of the word. The noble passion for knowledge has so filled the mind of the modern man of science that he hardly likes to think of its value in the realm of practice. Yet, both in its beginnings

and in its great modern developments, the application of scientific knowledge to the uses of life keeps pace with its progress.

When, in view of the splendid and truly amazing achievements of science in the modern world, we think of its effect upon our minds as regards our own position in the universe, our inevitable impulse is to consider almost exclusively the discoveries of theoretical science. We think of the incredibly vast system of the stars as revealed by modern astronomy, of the sciences of geology and biology, which have disclosed the records of the rocks, and the immense pedigrees of living creatures, of anthropology and archæology, with their story of the earlier races and civilisations. Or, again, we think of how cause and effect have been connected by a seemingly iron necessity throughout the wide realms of physical fact covered by the sciences of chemistry and physics. Here is a revelation of a system of physical forces which act with unfailing regularity. The unvarying "laws of nature" rule all occurrences. However these so-called "laws of nature" be regarded, it remains that they stand for sequences which no effort of our wills can change. No prayer of ours will alter their operation. The force of gravitation will act in its own way and slay us

without pity if we defy it. The lightning stroke will follow the path marked out for it by the nature of the medium through which it passes, altogether unaffected by moral considerations. The earthquake will exterminate its thousands without pausing to enquire whether they are good or bad, orthodox or heretic.

From this it would seem to follow that if there is intelligence in the physical universe, it is there in the way in which intelligence may be said to pervade a machine, and not as intelligence belongs to a sensitive human soul. The God who seemed to shine forth from the universe has disappeared, and cold, mechanical necessity has taken His place. Here is the experience which has brought a chill—the chill of unbelief —to many a heart.

But in all this we have forgotten to take the teaching of science in its fullness. We have taken theoretical science as our guide, and have failed to observe that practical science points in a wholly different direction. What are the lessons of practical science? When we begin to think of this side of our human experience, we seem to get a new and very different conception of the nature of the laws and forces of the material world.

The great business of man's workaday life, as we have seen, is his dealing with the forces of nature. We live in a world containing an amazing multitude of things. By constant trying man has discovered that these things can be made use of in an infinite variety of ways, so as to yield advantage or pleasure, to bring about, that is, desired results.

In all this, man is subduing the world to his own will: he is mastering the forces of nature and making them his obedient slaves. When scientific methods are developed—that is, when laws of nature are discovered and reduced to some system—this subjugation of nature goes on with vastly increased rapidity. Look at the earth as it is to-day—almost completely transformed by human effort. It is sometimes said that God made the country and man made the town. But what we call the country is really as artificial as any city. Only in the great mountain ranges, or in some tropical forests, or near the poles, is it possible to find regions untouched by the hand of man. Human hands have literally re-made the surface of the globe. And at the present day victory follows victory so rapidly in the human conflict with natural forces, that we have almost ceased to feel the thrill of surprise

which elated our fathers. If we heard to-morrow of a regular mail service from London to New York by aeroplane it would hardly move us.

What is the spiritual interpretation of all this? Surely it is the submissiveness of physical forces. Instead of living in a world in which the spirit is subdued to an iron necessity, we live in a world in which physical forces are everywhere doing homage to the lordship of the spirit. Man wills and nature yields. Man issues his commands and the world is at his feet.

It is worth our while to think a little more particularly how this is accomplished. First, let us note that the submissiveness of nature depends entirely upon the constancy of natural law. It is because there is uniformity in the ways in which things occur in nature, that man can trust the forces of nature to do his will. The unfailing character of natural law—or, in other words, the trustworthiness of nature—is the basis of all human work. When man has discovered that certain natural causes will always act in certain ways, he can then use those causes to produce the corresponding results as occasion may require. Thus the necessity of nature, as we call it, instead of

being a hindrance to man, is the means by which his power is secured. Man is free and mighty in the world simply because of this necessity. It is the very charter of his liberty and of his authority. Instead of being a cruel fate to bind him, this necessity sets him free to accomplish his purposes. Here is a most astonishing conclusion; for we saw a few moments ago that it is this very necessity of nature which, regarded from the side of theoretical science, gives the impression of a pitiless fate crushing out man's life and disappointing all his hopes. This very principle which, when presented by pure science, seems to reveal the world as a dungeon in which the spirit of man is hopelessly imprisoned, becomes, when presented by applied science, a revelation of the world as a sphere in which man is endowed with amazing powers and free to guide the course of events. Which is nearer to the truth? Surely it is the latter. Here, as everywhere, the test of truth is trial. If all experience shows that the necessity of nature is the charter of human freedom, no further proof need be demanded. The impression which we get from a merely abstract reflection is an illusion.

Secondly, it is important to consider that man escapes subjection to natural forces because

he is able to make them modify one another. He can combine natural causes so as to produce effects which the unassisted course of nature could never produce. He can use one force to counteract another. So it is that he can defeat gravitation, make water run uphill, see through the solid flesh of his own body, send his messages round the world without any visible medium. In fact, it may be said that all human work is accomplished in this way. Here again the forces and laws of the material world show themselves plastic to the will and in the hands of man. It would not be going too far to frame a definition of the first essential quality of spirit, as it is known to us in our human mind and will, and say it is that which is able to control natural forces with a view to the accomplishment of preconceived ends.

How wonderfully does this view of human activity in relation to nature react upon our theological conceptions! If, discerning the existence of a universal order, we believe in a Supreme Spirit, the inner life and cause of all that is, then surely we must learn His nature more fully from the practical side of our own spiritual activity than from the abstractions of theory. If God is spirit, then it must belong

to His nature essentially to use natural forces for the accomplishment of purpose. And this must be true of Him in a far higher degree than it is true of us. If the world is plastic to man, what must it be to God! We are therefore to rid our minds altogether of that old conception which thought of the universe as a vast machine, whether so created from the beginning or brought into being by a natural evolution. On the contrary, it is more fully in harmony with our experience, and also a higher conception, to think of God as the Spirit who is constantly moulding the world, responding to every movement of the life which it contains, guiding the course of events with a view to some supreme purpose. As we have seen, such moulding and such guidance are not inconsistent with the uniformity of natural law. Nay! the two are essentially related. It is just because the forces of nature work according to constant laws, that spirit is able to guide the course of events.

Take as an illustration of this principle the question of prayer for earthly benefits—for recovery from sickness, for fine weather, for good harvests. There are those who forbid such prayers on the ground that blessings of this kind come to us in accordance with the

settled order of nature. Dare we ask God to violate the laws, or disturb the course, of nature, in order to give us what we desire? But those who argue in this way forget that petitions addressed to our fellow-men for physical benefits are among our commonest experiences. We fall sick: we call in the doctor: we are cured. A man is plunged into deep water and is in danger of drowning; he cries out for help and is saved. Do the answers to such prayers as these involve any violation of the laws of nature? True it is that the course of events is altered. But that is exactly what the will of man can accomplish without any violation of natural law. Nay, as we have seen, just because natural law is trustworthy. Now, is it not absurd to suppose that the Almighty is powerless in a realm in which man can do so much? Does He labour under a disability from which His creature, man, is free? Is He so shackled by His own laws that He cannot respond to the changing needs of life? Believing as we do in the Infinite Spirit, we must also believe that His control of natural forces, and His ability to adapt them to changing circumstances, is infinitely greater than ours.

But, it may be asked, are we to suppose that

the Almighty interferes in an irregular manner in the grouping of natural causes, as we do, in order to bring about results which He desires? Do we see any signs of such interference in our ordinary experience? These questions are very serious and important. We cannot pretend to answer them fully. But surely we can see that, if there is this Divine control of events continually going on, its method must be, in some very profound way, different from ours. Perhaps the difference may be expressed thus: our control of natural forces is on the surface of things; God's must be from the centre. We make things by clumsily piecing together fragments which we gather from the world about us: God is the inner life of all. Therefore our work must be a very poor and imperfect imitation of His. But neither in the one case nor in the other are we to suppose there is any violation of the laws of nature. Rather, it is the constancy of nature which marks in both cases its subjection to the purposes of spirit. Or, again, take the case of miracle—a subject much discussed of late. If it be true that God controls the course of events from within, if it be true that He responds to all the changing needs of life, then surely there is no absurdity in supposing that at great

turning-points in human history, when the mind of man has need to be awakened to the reality of the spiritual, unusual events may occur, events which from their nature may serve as signs of greater things. It is clear that such signs must be relevant to the mind of the age in which they happen, and must serve as symbols to all generations.

But what about the unceasing tragedy of human life? What about the overwhelming physical universe which sooner or later swallows up every bodily existence? Can we really believe that, at the heart of it, there is a Great Spirit who with infinite love and providence is watching over His creatures and Who, in ways too subtle for our understanding, is making all things work together for good? Can we believe that no human cry goes unheard, no human sorrow unregarded? Is it indeed true that an Eternal Father is ever caring for the countless millions of humanity? As we reflect on these questions, let us think of the conclusions to which we have been led.

First, it is the testimony of human experience, a testimony which every advance in science strengthens, that all our life and all our work depend upon a fundamental trustworthiness in things: the power which

works in the universe is utterly trustworthy. No matter how appearances may be against this faith, in the end it is always justified.

Secondly, we have seen that the element in the world which, most of all, seems to crush us, the awful uniformity of nature, the constancy of law, the iron necessity in things—this it is which enables the spirit of man to master natural forces. It is, in truth, the proof that the world exists just for this, that supreme will may control it.

Finally, as we follow the wonderful process of creation, as we watch the great ascent to man, as we see human life gaining in power and significance, and attaining more and more to social and economic unity, we discern the truth that it is only in the things of the spirit that the meaning of the whole is to the found. As human effort applied to natural forces is more and more subduing the world to the dominion of the spirit, as it is more and more subordinating material things to the uses of intelligence, of will, and of love, so must we believe that the Supreme Spirit which lives and moves in the whole is not pursuing some different end, but is working with us, overruling our infirm and varying purposes, giving unity to our

endeavours, overcoming the evil, making all things work together for good, and preparing for the Kingdom of Eternal Love.[1]

[1] Throughout this discussion I have used the familiar conception of "natural law" which we owe to the scientific methods of an age which is rapidly passing. From more recent investigations, it would seem that this conception is really a mental framework combining elements abstracted from our concrete experience, and that it has been created in the pursuit of the practical aim. Hence the "iron necessity" of natural law in abstract theory, and its subservience in practice.

For a very interesting discussion of the meaning of the term "laws of nature," see Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, chapter xi.

## CHAPTER V THE ORDER OF CREATION

TO those who passed through the intellectual ferment of the latter part of the nineteenth century the recent revival of the controversy on religion and science seems a strange anachronism. Forty years ago the idea of evolution had become a familiar and most illuminating conception. It displayed a most splendid extension of the sphere of creative energy. Its adjustment to the fundamental principles of the Christian Faith seemed to involve no insuperable difficulty. On the contrary, it seemed to throw fresh light on many points. Our gains have indeed been so many that the present attack on this idea in the name of religion seems almost unintelligible. Does any sane man to-day wish to return to Dante's conception of the universe? Or even to Milton's? Dante and Milton are among the greatest of poets. To the music of their mighty organ-notes, we are transported into glorious realms of thought. But we of to-day can no more accept their views of the universe than we can accept that of Homer.

The truth is that science in our day has given a revelation of truth which has enriched beyond estimation our grasp of the world in which we live: it has shown us the greatness of the physical world, and, in that magnificent setting, has displayed a pageant of history stretching from the dim beginnings of life to the world of to-day. How absurd to suppose that such a revelation has taken from the glory of God and deprived man of religion!

Let us think of what we owe to science, apart from the mere roll of its discoveries.

First, it has given us a greatly exalted conception of Truth. The man of science seeks truth for its own sake. Absolute sincerity, the "single eye" which the Master praised so highly, has never been more signally vindicated or more wonderfully rewarded. One of the greatest glories of science is that no authority of the past, no great name, not even that of a Newton or a Darwin, can be used to close any controversy. There is nothing more characteristic of scientific method than its unfailing determination to sift the true from the false, within the scope of its operations, and to be diverted from this single aim by no influence whatever.

And so it is that science comes to man with a great vision of truth to be won by the patient

use of all human powers, and also with a wealth of intellectual enjoyment, a feast for the soul, and with hope for the future of mankind.

Science does not profess to teach us the truths which belong to religion. Its sphere is limited : its aim is clear. Yet it may be that we can deduce from its methods and its present attainments principles which can help us in that higher realm in which religion lives and moves. For example, science is knowledge ; and knowledge is a spiritual fact. It cannot be weighed in a balance or measured by any micrometer. Even if there could be devised an instrument which could register the movements in the cells of the brain which correspond to every thought, if there are such movements, we should be as far as ever from explaining the true nature of knowledge as it is in itself. Mechanical movements may correspond with spiritual facts, but they can never be identical with them. And the very essence of science is the knowledge which is gained, and not the mechanical processes which are used or observed in the pursuit of that knowledge. The means employed and the things examined may be material, the end, the purpose, is always spiritual. Science is, therefore, one of the grandest witnesses in the whole range of human

experience to the essential spirituality of the nature of man.

Secondly, the more recent developments of science have extended the historical view of the world in a most wonderful way. Science is not now so exclusively occupied with the discovery of physical causes as in former times. The tracing of the succession of events in the order of their occurrence fills a very large space in her activities. She has been in recent times recording and sifting an immense volume of observations, and arranging them with a view to the setting forth, in its main outlines, of the history of the physical universe. In this task science has been most amazingly successful. Astronomy, physics, geology, biology, anthropology, archæology, and history, as now studied, have united to present an almost continuous pageant of the phases of the process by which our present familiar world, and life as we know it, have come to be what they are. And this scientific re-statement of universal history has passed beyond the lecture-room and the learned journal, and has become the possession of the multitude. A popular literature is revealing it to hundreds of thousands. Even sensational novels are finding themes in the ideas thus set free.

This new view of the order of events in the history of the universe suggests at once a comparison with the account of creation and of the early history of the world which we have in the book of Genesis. We have already touched upon this problem. But it demands a more particular examination.

In the scientific account, the following stages may be noted : the formation of the stellar and solar systems ; the cooling of the earth and the shaping of it into continents and seas ; the emergence of conditions which made life as we know it possible ; the development of the vegetable and animal series in parallel lines, the one depending on the other ; the higher organisation of animal life through the formation of a nervous system and of brain ; the appearance of man, with his higher intelligence ; the making of human society ; the passage from lower human types to higher ; the emergence of civilisation, of literature, art, science, religion.

The earlier stages of the creative process were concerned with the development of the vast mechanism of the material universe. In due time, when the necessary conditions had arisen, life appeared. At first living forms were so rudimentary in character that they are not easily distinguishable from the crystallisations

produced by purely chemical processes. But soon there appeared forms which displayed a new power, the power of self-direction. We usually think of this power as it is revealed in our own experience in the way we call will. We think of it as the possession of the higher forms of life, possibly of man only. And it may be true that the form of self-direction which is properly called will may belong to the human mind only. This term may perhaps be best reserved for that conscious choice and self-determination which we know in our own experience. But it seems now to be clear that some real degree of spontaneity, of inner impulsion, is to be found very far down in animal life. It is even said that those invisible animal jellies which inhabit every pool show some beginning of that power of self-direction which, in its highest known form, in ourselves, becomes the power of will. And with this power comes, or must come, some degree of feeling ; and, as creatures rise in the scale, increased variety of feeling, and ultimately intelligence. Very faint at first, these powers grow in clearness and efficacy, all through the long history of animate being, until they reach their culmination in man.

Various theories have been set forth to explain how stage succeeds stage in this upward

process of creation. Most of the disputes to which the idea of evolution has given rise have to do with these theories—the theories of Lamarck, of Darwin, and others. Here we accept none of these theories. There are reasons for and against them all. Here we are simply concerned with the history itself, which seems to be abundantly proved. A full scientific explanation of it is not yet in sight. Nor need this trouble us, for science has to do with the links in the chain ; religion has to do with the meaning of the whole. Science seeks to know how the process takes place ; religion seeks for the principles which the process reveals.

It may be said, and has indeed been said, both in ancient and modern times, that there is no meaning in the whole, no purpose, no principle, behind the process. The history of the universe, on this view, is a series of accidents. If we admire the result, we can call it a series of happy accidents. If we view the world in a pessimistic way, we can call them unhappy accidents. And there can be no doubt that, if we assume the infinity of the material universe in time and space, conceived in the old manner, we can, in theory, suppose that there took place in one region of it an indefinitely great number of fortunate accidents which, operating through an immense

period of time, produced the result that we know. But science is now turning away from this way of regarding space, time, and the universe.

Without, however, attaching very great importance to this change in the views of science, it is surely the simplest and most reasonable interpretation of a vast world-process—which, leading up through a continually ascending series of changes, finally produced an order of highly intelligent beings, possessed of moral faculty, and brought about social life, with all its potentialities of spiritual attainment—that the whole is the expression of a supreme purpose. A spiritual result may surely be best explained by a spiritual aim. And when we see the spiritual result come into being as the outcome of a great universal process, a process to which every stage in the whole succession of events contributes, we may well conclude that a spiritual intention pervades the whole. The Creative Power was guided by a world-embracing purpose. That purpose was to bring into being a social order of intelligent moral beings, beings capable of knowledge, will, goodness, love ; capable also of seeking those eternal things which belong to the realm of the spiritual ; and not merely to bring such beings

into existence, but to give them a world for their habitation here, and, as we may also well believe, to prepare them for another and higher sphere. Like other and smaller things, we can most reasonably judge of the creative process by its results in the first instance, and then by its tendency as a whole.

This view of the nature of the creative process is not only in harmony with the results of scientific research ; it also affords a larger and grander interpretation of the religious experiences of mankind. For, as we have seen, man, from a very early period in his history, manifested an irresistible tendency to find spiritual agencies at work in the world about him. With all his crude, confused thinking about the things and events within his experience, was ever blended a conviction that the meaning of things was to be found in the existence of mysterious watching and directing powers behind things seen and touched. He might represent these powers to his mind by the forms of animals—the lion, the serpent, the wolf—creatures whose strength or cunning he dreaded or admired, but he endowed them with mental attributes higher than his own. From this lowly level of thinking, he rose to the thought of beings higher than himself but human in

form. And then finally there supervened on all this the belief in the One Supreme God, Creator and Ruler of the world. The instinctive movement of the primitive mind to trace conscious purpose and will in the things and events of the world was purified and exalted, and its full purport and meaning manifested, when the great monotheistic conception of God broke through the mists, and scattered the clouds of superstitious fear, like the sun arising in his strength.

The account of creation in the book of Genesis is a very wonderful thing. First because of the simplicity and directness with which it traces all creation to the sole agency of the will of God. There is no mythology. As we have already seen, there is no personification of the forces of nature, as in the Babylonian myths. Further, there is an ascending order in the events of creation. First, the material world, then the realm of living things, vegetable and animal, finally man. This order arises naturally and inevitably out of the monotheistic conception. A polytheistic pantheon is bound to give a mythical shape to every account of origins. Belief in One Sole Supreme Deity sweeps away all such conceptions, and brings order into the thought of creation. Also man takes his proper

place in the scale of things, because, when the animal gods and the nature-spirits vanish, God on high and man below are face to face. The inspiration of the story of creation in Genesis flows directly from the sublime monotheistic conception of God.

From this great old story in the Book of Genesis it might appear that, with the work of the six days, reaching its climax in man, the creative process came to a conclusion. And this was inferred in former times, when these accounts were regarded as literal statements of matters of fact. "And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." Taken quite literally, these words were supposed to imply that creation ceased when man was called into being and given his place and prerogative in relation to the world and other living things. But it ought surely to have been clear at any time that creative activity could not have ceased at that moment, unless we suppose that the world and all that it contains are like a great clock wound up and set going, a machine which is constructed to work of itself until its maker intervenes to

change or correct its working. And such was apparently the conception of the world which was entertained at one time. Yet it was a conception quite inconsistent with the belief in the continual providential care of God which was usually held at the same time. The clock conception of the universe is certainly consistent with the belief that every event in the history of the world was settled beforehand by Divine decree at the beginning, but it is not consistent with the idea of God as a Father, always watching over His children and caring for their good by His continual providence, hearing their prayers, responding to the desires of their hearts, and dealing with them in accordance with their varying needs.

If this last conception of God in relation to the world is to be maintained, we must think of Him as One who works continually in His creation. And this is surely the thought of Him which is implied in all our Lord's teaching ; and that not merely about God in relation to the life of man, but in relation to all His creatures. It is the great Father in heaven who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies. It is He whose loving providence watches over the sparrows, so that not one of them falls to the ground without His care. And all this teaching

is summed up in one magnificent sentence recorded by St. John: "My Father worketh even until now and I work."

This saying is all the more notable because it is very closely connected with the rigid law of the Sabbath, which Jewish teaching based on a very literal application of the old precepts. It was Christ's reply to the Jews who raised objection to one of His works of mercy because it was done on the Sabbath Day. Nothing is more evident than that He deliberately intended to open the way for a more kindly and human observance of the holy day. And usually His teaching on the subject is based on this principle. But, in the passage in St. John's Gospel to which we are now referring, He, in effect, challenges the interpretation of the scriptural account of creation which was made the foundation of the stricter regulations. God rested, it was said, on the seventh day, having finished the work of creation. Therefore the holiness of the day must be preserved by an absolute cessation of work of every kind. Christ did not criticise the ancient scripture: He pointed to a new principle deeper than the old. He taught that the work of God in creation never ceases, and He claimed for His own work a like character. It is a notable instance of the method of His

teaching as described by Himself : " Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." And what is ever His way of fulfilment but to dig deeper into the foundations of truth and to reveal the underlying principles ? The principle revealed here is that there is a work of God which goes on through the ages.

Here is exactly the change in the conception of creative activity which has taken place in our time in the realm of science. Not all at once, at some decisive epoch in the past, did the world of material things and of living forms reach its present condition, with its amazing wealth and variety, but by slow processes of alteration, by the accumulation of minute differences, perhaps, at some points, by sudden mutations ; but certainly by a ceaseless creative process. That is the teaching of science ; and, when viewed as a whole, it presents to our minds a far grander vision of Divine working than the older mode of thinking. It presents also an all-pervading unity, a real order in the universe. It reveals an interdependence among created things which was at all times dimly discerned but which only now is displayed. To the unity of the Creator corresponds the unity of His work. And, as this unity is traced throughout the

whole, we find creation rising, stage after stage, height after height, until it culminates in a spiritual order crowned by the advent of the Perfect Man.[1]

[1] J. N. Shearman's *Natural Theology of Evolution* gives a very thoroughgoing examination of the problem of the value of the argument from design in relation to the scientific conception of evolution. "The result of the whole argument is to show that the marks of design which the world exhibits and the testimony which it bears to its Creator, so far from being obscured or diminished by the discovery of the process of evolution, become clearer, brighter, and more convincing than they ever were before." This is the author's summing up of the whole investigation. See also the writer's *Science and Creation*.

TO the lover of art who wanders through the churches and galleries of Italy there comes a time when reflection succeeds to admiration. First, he notes the piety of the earlier stages expressed by a technique the fresh purity of which made it a perfect vehicle for simple faith and simpler emotions. Then he observes the extraordinary influence of the relics of ancient art at the Renaissance and the transformation it produced. There emerged a new era marked by a passionate love of art for art's sake, and a mastery of its processes which has never been equalled. But the strange thing was that this Christian paganism chose to depict the tenderest scenes of the Gospel story. And its representations of them remain the most powerful and the most appealing that the hand of man has ever produced. It is in vain that the superfine critic tries to divert the preference of mankind from this great tradition. It is far too strong for him. Michael Angelo, Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Titian, and Botticelli can never be dethroned.

In Italy there are too many Holy Families, too many Madonnas with the Holy Child. It is as if these great masters were never satisfied. They did their best, but the subject was too great for them. They could show picture after picture of lovely, and sometimes of holy, womanhood. But hardly ever did they get anywhere near a satisfying representation of the Divine Child. And, indeed, how could they? How can a simple human baby be also Divine? How they struggled with this problem and how they failed the pictures show. They do best when they give up the effort to solve the problem and paint a mere infant, beautiful indeed, but with a beauty only human. So it is in Andrea del Sarto's famous picture. The secret of its charm is that, while the mother is as holy as she is lovely, the child is just a child. How even Raphael fails when he tries to express in the eyes of an infant the mystery and awe of the universe!

There is in the Gospels no hint that the Infant Christ revealed any qualities but those which properly belong to a human being at that stage in his development. Of his boyhood we are told that "the child grew and waxed strong, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him"; and St. Luke adds at a later stage

of his narrative that " Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." We may, indeed, well believe that He showed unusual gifts of mind and heart, clear indications of the " grace of God " ; but these passages convey no suggestion of superhuman powers. Nor, again, does the account of the scene in the Temple, when He was twelve years old. That He had attained to a sense of God, to a consciousness of the great Father's presence and love, we certainly find conveyed in this passage. Here first is manifested that consciousness of God which shone out so clearly in the years of His ministry. But there is nothing to show that, at that early age, His "understanding and His answers," which astonished the doctors, were the outcome of a supernatural wisdom, the voice of God rather than the voice of a boy who showed a deep and wonderful penetration into spiritual things.

Nor is there anything to prove that, during the eighteen years between this event of His boyhood and the beginning of His ministry, He displayed superhuman powers which astonished his neighbours. All the knowledge we have of these years is contained in the single sentence, " Is not this the Carpenter ? "

When we pass from these early years to the

period of the ministry, Jesus, after the vision at His baptism and the spiritual struggle in the wilderness, is revealed to us as a preacher of repentance, who takes up the call uttered by the Baptist, but adds to it the proclamation of the Kingdom. Then we read of one wonderful work after another, miracles as we call them, "signs," to use the word by which they are described—that is, proofs of his mission and manifestations of the Divine power. They showed that God was at work in the mission of Jesus, that the announcement of the Kingdom was a real message from God. Nowadays there are those who find the miracles a difficulty, but they are not able to show that the complete omission of the miraculous element from the Gospels would increase the evidence for the Divine mission of Jesus. Nor does the view that the miracles of healing may be to some degree paralleled by the spiritual healings of modern times supply any firm basis for faith. The effect of this view is really negative. The truth is that the miraculous element in the life of Jesus Christ is just as necessary for us to-day as it was for His followers at the beginning, if we are to hold to our Christian Faith. Yet it is true that the miracles, taken by themselves, do not prove His divinity. They are

an element which adds emphasis: they awaken the mind to face the great question: they stir us to wonder, doubt, examination. They set us the problem: they do not solve it.

Where, then, is the solution of the problem to be found? The answer is that it is to be found in three elements. First, in the perfection of His humanity. Secondly, in His revelation of God. Thirdly, in His victory through death and resurrection. These are elements which can be proved and tested to-day quite as well as in the beginning. They need no critical examination of texts, no elaborate investigation of sources, no dogmatic system to support or interpret them.

Think of Jesus as a human being. Take the abrupt, disjointed narrative of St. Mark, that Gospel which is just a collection of the early accounts, put together without literary art, for the sake of keeping them in mind. Jesus begins with the call to repentance and the proclamation of the Kingdom. He calls some fishermen on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, speaking to them in the simple language they would understand, "Come ye after Me and I will make you to become fishers of men." He goes on to Capernaum and teaches: men note

a strange authority in His manner of teaching. The sick and suffering seek Him: He heals them. There is tremendous excitement throughout the whole countryside. But He shrinks from this popularity. "A great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." But His disciples, carried away by the popular excitement, follow Him, and say, "All are seeking Thee." And He replies, "Let us go elsewhere, into the next towns, that I may preach there also." It is a true and beautifully delicate touch, intensely and nobly human, in that simple way which belongs to the greatest souls. The shrinking from earthly honours and conspicuous recognitions is everywhere apparent. Only at the end, with a shameful death clearly in view, does He accept the acclamations of the multitude, and permit them to hail Him as King. It is the humility which is no disguise for an inward pride, which calls no attention to itself as a mark of distinction. Yet there never was so tremendous a self-assertion as that of Jesus. It was not merely that He accepted the title "the Christ," but that He assumed, in every teaching and in every action, a position of sovereignty over the soul of each man or woman who approached Him, that He

claimed complete devotion to Himself, and absolute authority. It was this calm assumption of authority which enabled Him to revise the Law of the Old Testament, and to deal freely with its most sacred observances. It was thus that He fulfilled the Law. And the source of this sense of authority is clearly indicated in that wonderful scene recorded by the first and third evangelists, in which the disciples overhear His communion with God: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been delivered unto Me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." St. Luke describes this as His "rejoicing" in "the Holy Spirit." And, while it is worth noting that the passage is as well authenticated as anything in the Gospels, it is surely obvious that its truth is evidenced by its internal quality. And the whole theology of the fourth Gospel is implicit in it. Here is but one line of investigation which leads us to see that He who showed that delicate modesty and humility

of mind which made Him shrink from the applause of the multitude at the same time made the greatest claims ever put forth by any human being. Yet as we read the simple story in the Gospels no inconsistency appears.

In this connection must also be mentioned His perfect sanity of mind and judgment. As Harnack says, while " his whole life, all his thoughts and feelings, were absorbed in the relation to God . . . he did not talk like an enthusiast and a fanatic, who sees only one red-hot spot, and so is blind to the world and all that it contains. He spoke his message and looked at the world with a fresh clear eye for the life, great and small, that surrounded him. He proclaimed that to gain the whole world was nothing if the soul were injured, and yet he remained kind and sympathetic to every living thing. That is the most astonishing and the greatest fact about him." " He is possessed of a quiet, uniform, collected demeanour, with everything directed to one goal. He never uses any ecstatic language, and the tone of stirring prophecy is rare. Entrusted with the greatest of all missions, his eye and ear are open to every impression of the life around him—a proof of intense calm and absolute certainty." " He strikes the mightiest notes ; he offers men an

inexorable alternative; he leaves them no escape; and yet the strongest emotion seems to come naturally to him, and he expresses it as something natural; he clothes it in the language in which a mother speaks to her child."[1] That is an admirable description of the strange union of spiritual intensity with perfect sanity and mental poise which are characteristic of Jesus.

These instances reveal the truth that in the character of Jesus all the great human qualities, even the most opposite, are to be found in the highest degree. In addition to those already noted, we can observe His tenderness and His strength, His gentleness and His courage, His lowliness and His loftiness, His patient forbearance and His swift decisiveness, His profound sympathy with the sinner and His stern judgment upon sin. In Him there is no laxity, no condoning of sin, yet He receives notorious sinners in a way which shocks the good people of the time.

Again, in the Gospels are to be found the elements of the social controversies of our modern world. The teachings of Jesus are often regarded as the finest expression of the doctrine of the brotherhood of man, and so

[1] Harnack, English translation, *What is Christianity?* Lecture II.

indeed they are. He has sometimes been described as a socialist working-man. But, on the other hand, He stands, for all ages, as the teacher of the supreme value of the individual. The absolute value of every human being in the sight of God was one of the foundation stones of His doctrine. The good shepherd goes to seek the one lost sheep. The house is swept for the one lost piece of money. "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." "The hairs of your head are all numbered." And this preciousness of the individual is not merely for the chosen people, for those who are born into special relationship to God, as the Jew of that time would imagine. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the area of responsibility towards man is extended so as to include the outsider; and the amazing thing about the parable is that the hated Samaritan, heretic and enemy, is made to be the example of boundless goodness; the Israelite is the object of his bounty.

Further, Jesus was no ascetic. He is contrasted with John the Baptist. The Baptist was a hermit, living in the desert, supporting his life on such scanty food as the wilderness afforded, clothed in the rough garment which

matched his way of living. Of Jesus indeed it was said, after His mission began, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." But, none the less, He took a man's full share of the good things of life when they were offered to Him. Therefore He contrasted His way of living with that of the Baptist. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." In these normal things of human life, Jesus was man among men, no recluse, no despiser of the simple enjoyments of daily existence. And so it was that he accepted invitations to share the pleasures of festive occasions, the wedding, the dinner. At these He was a willing guest.

Finally, in the study of his humanity, there is nothing more profoundly interesting than His relation to the other sex. He taught the naturalness and the blessedness of marriage: both are included in His teaching as to its origin. The union of the man and the woman is the will of God: "God hath joined" them together. It is to be a union for life: that is involved in the very order of creation. One

cause of separation He seems to admit. But the principle of life-long union remains. It was a revolutionary doctrine to Jewish ears. It marked the bringing into the world of a new conception of holiness in married life. But what was the attitude of Jesus Himself towards women? In the most important passage of His teaching on this subject He speaks of those who renounce the blessedness of the marriage-state "for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake." The reference is surely to His own life and mission. The attitude of Jesus towards women and His relationship with them form the purest and most lovely element in the history of mankind. The attraction of His personality was, for them, irresistible; but it was always a force which lifted them upwards. Jesus did not shrink from the touch of the sinner abandoned to her shame by the good people of the day, but that touch conveyed no hint or suggestion of anything but blessing. He could associate freely with the women who followed Him, and loved to hang upon His words, and to minister to His needs; but the records of that association remain for all time spotless in their purity.

When all these elements in the humanity of Jesus are considered, and when they are seen

to belong to a Personality which, for all generations ever since, has impressed itself on the heart and mind of man with a distinctness and a moral force unexampled in history, we must conclude that there is no discord among them. The character of Jesus possesses a unity which has no parallel. It could not be what it is, and has been, in the world, if it were a mere congeries of discordant characteristics. For Jesus Himself is the vital force at the heart of Christianity. Apart from Him it could not exist ; for every renewal of its life has been the result of a fresh apprehension of Him.

Humanity full-orbed ; humanity with all its best and truest elements raised to their highest development ; humanity at its noblest, expressed in a single life of extraordinary simplicity—that is the fact of Jesus. And that is the problem which demands some explanation.

In the sixth century B.C. there lived one of the world's most daring and original thinkers, Xenophanes of Colophon. Only fragments of his works survive. But they are among the most remarkable of human utterances. In them we meet a mind whose thought seems fresh even to our modern ears. " There is one God . . . neither in shape nor in thought like unto mortals . . . without an effort he ruleth all

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things by thought. Yet men imagine gods to be born, and to have raiment and voice and body like themselves. Even so the gods of the Ethiopians are swarthy and flat-nosed, the gods of the Thracians are fair-haired and blue-eyed. Even so, Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods all that is a shame and a reproach among men. . . . Even so oxen, lions, and horses, if they had hands wherewith to grave images, would fashion gods after their own shapes and make their bodies like to their own.[1] This penetrating saying has been hailed time after time as a conclusive criticism of every anthropomorphic conception of the nature of God. It has been like a sword in the hand of the agnostic. Yet Xenophanes was no agnostic. He was, it would seem, the first of philosophers to maintain a purely spiritual doctrine of God. He was a forerunner of Hegel. Some think he was more like Spinoza, a pure pantheist.

It would seem, however, that Xenophanes was not quite accurate in supposing that men always make gods in their own image. He was misled by the theology of the Greeks. Though he rightly exposed the absurdity of the gods of

[1] See article "Xenophanes," Prof. H. Jackson, in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, eleventh edition.

Homer—a very daring thing to do in the sixth century B.C.—he was not aware that even the Homeric gods belonged to a somewhat advanced period of human thought. When we go back to the beginnings of Egyptian religion, we find the worship of animal deities to be universal. Sir W. Flinders Petrie tells us that in the prehistoric period the objects of worship are of this kind, while "the human figures of the same age seem to be distinctly servitors to satisfy the wants of the dead, and not to represent higher beings." The lion, the hawk, the frog, the serpent are common in these early representations. The jackal, the bull, the baboon, the crocodile and many others become more numerous in the next phase. Sir W. Flinders Petrie traces the following development: (1) the pure animal-worship; (2) animal-headed gods with human bodies; (3) the human gods of the Osiris cycle; (4) the cosmic gods of the Rā cycle; (5) the abstract gods of principles; (6) the gods brought in from foreign sources.[1] Anthropomorphism would seem, then, to arise at a fairly late stage, for, behind the prehistoric age of Egypt, there was an immense development of which no record remains.

[1] See article "Egyptian Religion," in Hastings's *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

This consideration seems to affect certain modern theories also. According to Professor Freud, God is the projection into the world of the "father," who was, for the child of each generation, his protector against surrounding dangers. In primitive states of society "the father is affected by a peculiar ambivalence, . . . he is feared no less than he is longed for and admired. . . . Now when the child grows up and finds that he is destined to remain a child for ever, and that he can never do without protection against unknown and mighty powers, he invests these with the traits of the father-figure; he creates for himself the gods of whom he is afraid, whom he seeks to propitiate, and to whom he nevertheless entrusts the task of preserving him."[1] It seems very difficult to reconcile this with the actual history of the development of religious ideas. Dr. Freud seems to admit that, in his study of *Totem and Tabu*, he did not succeed in connecting animal-worship with Father-worship, yet he affirms an intimate connection between the two because "the totem animals become the sacred animals of the gods." But it appears, rather, that, as the animals become gradually humanised as gods, and as the human element grows in

[1] Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*. English translation by Robson-Scott.

strength, the animal element assumes the forms of sacred animals. And when the myriad gods of Eastern pantheons are remembered, it can be reasonably argued that, even in highly developed religions, the "father-figure" does not at all occupy the exclusive position claimed for it by Dr. Freud. The Professor is indeed building on his own peculiar psychology rather than on the actual facts of religious experience.

The truth is that the conception of God as "the Father," in a unique and comprehensive manner, never appeared in religion, as a fully developed and exclusive thought of God, until it was presented in the teaching of Our Lord. In the religion of Israel, the idea of God as Father certainly occurs, most impressively in Psalm ciii., but it is not the usual or characteristic way of thinking about God. To Israel, their God, Jehovah, or Jahveh, was King. The nation formed a theocracy.

It has often been observed that, in the earlier period in the ministry of Jesus, there is a joyous sense of the value and brightness of human life. But this gladness in living is not the expression of youthful spirits, still less of animal exuberance. It springs from one pure source, the sense of the presence of God as the Father who is ever loving and ever watching over His

children. The expression of this is to be found most clearly in the early teaching. Jesus comes proclaiming blessing for the poor, the meek, the hungry, the mourners, the persecuted. Whether these descriptions are to be regarded as pointing to the suffering and needy in a literal sense, as in St. Luke, or are to be largely spiritualised, as in St. Matthew, the effect is the same. There is a blessing which is not dependent on material conditions. And when the Great Teacher comes to deal with the anxious toilers of the world, His message is one of joyful confidence. "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Behold the birds . . . consider the lilies." God provides for these His creatures, food for the one, beauty for the others, for each according to its need. But here is no exhortation to idleness and carelessness of living. "Your heavenly Father" knows your need. "But seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things," the supply for your bodily needs, "shall be added unto you." When we look deeply into these simple words, and consider how wide is the sweep of "the kingdom" which Jesus proclaimed, we can see that here is the secret of all noble living. For, surely, we must

understand the Kingdom to be no purely eschatological vision, as some recent critics imagine, but the Rule of God in human life.[1]

Throughout all this early teaching can be felt a glad confidence in God's providential love and care filling the simplest things of daily life with happiness.

There is one passage of the early teaching upon which the shadow of the coming tragedy seems to fall; and yet it reveals most of all the sense of gladness which pervaded the earlier days of the ministry. John's disciples and the Pharisees were in the habit of fasting, and "they come and say unto Him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day."[2] It was certainly the intention of Jesus that His disciples should realise that they who enjoy the sunshine of the great Father's presence should feel the gladness of it.

Then round the little company of believers

[1] See Dalman, *Words of Jesus*. [2] Mark ii. 18–20.

there gather the dark clouds of earthly opposition. The days were coming when the bridegroom was to be taken away. The threatening powers of evil reveal themselves. And Jesus begins to tell His followers of the awful struggle which is before them, and of the sufferings that He foresees for Himself. And so their way of life is darkened until it reaches the terror of the Cross.

In trying to place such a life as this in the age-long record of man's existence on the globe, and to interpret it in relation to the whole, account must be taken of that modern conception of man's position in creation which is accepted by the whole cycle of the sciences which deal historically with the earth and its inhabitants. The very central principle of this way of regarding man is the recognition of his kinship with all creation. He is not a separate being intruded into the related series of living things, dwelling among them but not of them, owning powers which are not only higher than theirs, but altogether different. To the modern mind which has grasped the truths which the natural sciences have revealed, man can look round him upon a universe with which he is akin. The processes of his body are, so far as they have been explored, chemical in their

nature, more complicated indeed, but of like sort with the simpler chemistry of the rocks and waters of the earth. The organic functions which belong to his living organism can be paralleled in the lives of those creatures that we call lower. Moreover, it is now almost universally believed among those who have studied the proper branches of science, that man is, by actual descent, derived from more lowly forms, and is therefore actually a blood-relation of all living creatures.

Is this doctrine of man's kinship with the universe in which he lives a creed which should degrade him in his own eyes, or one which should exalt him? As one to whom this question has been a matter of vivid interest throughout a long life, the writer confesses that the sense of kinship with all creation, the realisation that every living thing is a blood-relation, has been to him a source of intense joy. How it helps the thoughtful mind to look with loving eyes upon all the lowly families of the earth! How wonderfully it links together the little and the great, the ugly and the beautiful, the failures and the successes, and all other contrasted things in our varied experiences! The most magnificent things in creation, the glory of the sunrise on snowy summits, or the depths of some great

forest ; the delicately beautiful things, harebells quivering in the summer breeze, gladness in the eyes of a child ; the awful things, a tempest at sea, the death of a friend ; the infinite play of emotion and action in human life, the busy scene in a disturbed ant-heap. These are examples chosen at random ; yet they are all part of one great life in which I share. They are mine. All their wealth of meaning, all their mystery, all that is known of them and all that is unknown : it is mine as much as theirs.

True it is that this rich and wonderful creation contains pain and evil in many forms. That remains, however it may be viewed. But these great facts of pain and evil acquire a new meaning in relation to me, and are, it may seem, penetrated by a new hope, if it be true that all living things are so related that none suffers or dies to itself alone.

Now, it seems clear that Jesus looked with loving eyes not only upon the human beings who flocked round Him, but upon all creation. Of the sparrows He said, " Not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God," or, as St. Matthew reports the saying, " Not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father." Again, of the birds in general, " Your heavenly Father feedeth them." And as God cares for the life

of His creatures, so also does He care for their beauty. Of the lilies, He declares that God clothes them with a beauty more lovely than any adornment that human art can produce. "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." And so again all the simple things of the daily life of the country-side provide Him with teaching and illustration: the sowing of the seed, the springing of the corn, the reaping of the harvest, the shepherd and the sheep, the vine and the fig-tree, the fisherman and his net, the life of the village, in which neighbour calls for help to neighbour. And how He loved the young: the babies brought by their mothers, the child set in the midst as an example, the children playing in the market-place. Instance might be added to instance indefinitely, to show how Jesus loved all true natural and human things, and blessed them with His sympathy. Nowhere in literature is revealed so deep a sense of kinship with the whole world of created things, and especially with the living beings of the earth, from the lowliest to the highest.

If we regard the universe as displaying signs of creative wisdom and power, we must, in our time, follow the order which has been disclosed by the cycle of sciences which deal with the

various phases through which the upward movement from simpler to more complex forms of being has passed. There is revealed an amazing and majestic succession. Astronomy has become more wonderful than ever. It shows us stupendous nebulæ, which are galaxies in the making, consisting of vaporous mist out of which millions of suns are being formed. It teaches us to think of these vast processes in millions of years and millions of millions of miles. It can calculate the heat of suns, measure and weigh them, and tabulate the phases of their history. Compared with these vast bodies, the earth is but a speck. But quality is more important than quantity, and the history of our little world shows a gradual development from lowly to higher forms of being. In the series of living things, with their innumerable forms and gradations, and their acquisition of higher powers, we observe a steady advance from forms so lowly that they seem but specks of animated jelly, up through myriad varieties, gradually assuming a greater complexity of organisation, and larger powers in dealing with their environment, to those higher creatures who possess powers approximating to our own. At a very early stage, life divides into the parallel orders of vegetable and animal, the former, for

the most part, feeding directly on the inorganic world, the latter depending on the supply of the same elements as prepared and fitted for assimilation by the processes of vegetation. How marvellous is the interdependence of the whole world of living things, how amazing their variety in unity! And at the summit of this wonderful ascent is man, with his brain and nervous system, in all their incredible complexity, serving as the instrument of powers which include, sum up, and surpass all that have gone before.

When we discern, in this universal system, the purpose and agency of a Supreme Spiritual Power, we are affirming the one principle which is truly explanatory of the whole. And for two reasons. First, because science itself, the methods of intelligent enquiry by which we have been able to discern a universal order, must assume, as the basis of all its activities, that the contents of the world are knowable; or, in other words, that the spiritual faculties of man are akin to the principles which inform the whole. And the success of science is proof of the soundness of the assumption. Secondly, because the whole course of development leads to the emergence of quality as distinct from quantity. Millions of millions of years seem

terribly impressive to a being for whom seventy years is a long life. But that is only because, in imagination, we endow the millions with a value which they do not, and cannot, possess. Apart from experience to fill them up with qualitative values, a million years are of no account; or, rather, they are mere counters in a world of abstractions. Only the spiritual can ultimately explain anything. And as the spiritual principle which we find in the individual human being is certainly insufficient to account for the whole course of the universal order of things, we are driven back upon belief in the Supreme Spiritual Power.

Now, the old conception of the Creator led to thoughts of Him which removed Him from us in a manner which made Him inaccessible. Christianity found the remedy for this in the doctrine of the Incarnation. But even that doctrine, as presented in the past, introduced into Christian thought a war of principles which no effort of the theologians ever overcame. How to reconcile the two natures in the one Person was the problem out of which sprang all the ancient heresies. And while faith could triumph by the affirmation of both the Divine and the human, theology never quite succeeded in the task of justifying this venture. But

when we discern that the true revelation which the whole order of creation gives us of God is that of the Power which subdues all material forces to the uses of the spirit, making them subserve the advent of feeling, thought, knowledge, truth, love, faith, all the elements that go to the making of true humanity, revealing at the same time the evils which correspond to these lofty endowments, and the spiritual powers which can overcome the evils, and finally summing up all that is true, noble, and lovely in human nature in a single Person, we have reason to believe that in Him is manifested both the human and the Divine in a perfect union. When the point of view indicated here is maintained, it is impossible to imagine any more fitting manifestation of the Divine. Only the perfect humanity can reveal the Divinity.

## CHAPTER VII IMMORTALITY

WHEN we endeavour to think out the doctrine of immortality, we find that it is as difficult to satisfy the heart and the imagination as to meet the demands of the intellect. The affections speak their simple language of love which cannot die, of re-unitings which shall be for ever. But the critical mind awakens and asks the inevitable questions. In what sort of life, and under what conditions, can such eternal happiness be enjoyed? The natural shrinking from death, the cruel separations which it brings, the tragic circumstances which surround it: these impel us to resistance; but they do not dispel our doubts. An immortality of such existence as we have in this world is not a thing to be desired, even if we could so adjust our thoughts as to conceive it possible.

We often think of life as spoiled by death: it is not unwise to reflect sometimes upon the consolations of mortality. As we are situated here, it would be well, neither for ourselves nor

for others, that we should be immortal. What is called knowledge of the world is always a weariness to the spirit. How dreadful to be burdened with a worldly wisdom of, let us say, twenty centuries' growth! How unfair to the young to have to compete with such elders! Again, we think with sadness of the loss of good men; but surely we might think with joy of the fact that some of this world's greatest men are past and gone. It is much more pleasing to look back upon the lives of such men as Alexander and Cæsar than to have experience of their doings; and it is surely a consolation to reflect that Attila, Jenghis, Napoleon, and other scourges, can no more afflict mankind, that they are now, like bottled snakes in a museum, objects of interest rather than fear. And when we read of torture and outrage, of murder and massacre, is it not a blessing to know that such things cannot go on for ever, that both torturers and tortured must pass soon from the scene. Death sets a limit to every joy, doubtless; but also it sets a limit to every earthly ill. If its silence falls sometimes upon our souls as the hush of a dreadful mystery, at other times it is the silence of peace.

But the Christian hope of a bodily resurrection never contemplated a continuance of the

conditions which make possible the characteristic ills of our present life. The future is to be a life from which sin and sorrow are excluded. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." These familiar words are among those which have power to stir to rapture the hearts of believers, in anticipation of the fulfilment of the great promise. Their power is derived from the force of contrast. They are for those who know what pain is, who have heard the voice of crying, who have tasted sorrow, and seen the shadow of death; but who have not been utterly wearied of life, who feel that life and joy and the companionship of kindred souls are well worth having, if only the familiar ills of our present existence can be abolished.

We know, however, that for nearly one half of mankind this way of regarding the question has no attraction. The East has no belief in life. The evil which takes away all value from

existence is, for its thought, of the very essence of our experience. Life is composed of two elements, according to this teaching, pleasure and pain, and every pleasure becomes a pain, because we must lose it. Pleasure is pain in the making. Our conscious life is essentially concerned with the fugitive; therefore there can be no abiding satisfaction. The Eternal Silence is the only true peace. So speaks the brooding East.

And certainly when we analyse our experience we find much to support this conclusion. The texture of our conscious experience is not of a kind to last for ever. We tire of the round of earthly engagements, and even the keenest interests involve elements which wear out. When a man has gained all that the world can give him, he finds himself unsatisfied, and should he cease to feel the perpetual need, it would mean, not that he was satisfied, but that he was satiated—that he had had enough and desired no more. Desire is of the essence of our life here, and desire is dissatisfaction continually renewed. Again, the bodily organs through which all our experience is mediated are essentially perishable. They have indeed a power of inward renewal which lasts for a certain period, but this renewal depends on a

process of continual destruction and reconstruction. Life, it has been said, is an organised decomposition. There can be no finality about such a process but that which belongs to dissolution.

There are those amongst the thoughtful people of our time who feel the demands of the bodily organism as a great oppression, a source of weariness and disgust. For them there could be no more terrible thought than an eternity of such physical life as we have in this world. And how, we may well ask, can we conceive of a future existence mediated through an organism of any other sort? We have explored the physical universe, we have been able to note the stages of that vast evolution by which creation has advanced through all the forms of being which have led to man. Are we to suppose that the conscious life which has come to itself under such conditions is to find in the future world some physical organ of a different sort, a sort so different that, instead of continually undergoing decay in a world where all passes, it will correspond to the conditions of an eternal order of things. This surely seems contrary to all analogy.

Shall we, then, fall back on the old idea of an immortality of the soul? There is much to

be said for such a course. Modern idealist philosophy has been able to set the unity of the self in a clear light. However we may seem to analyse that unity, we can never get rid of the fact that the thing we are analysing is itself the agent, presupposed in the whole process. Do we take refuge in the hypothesis that the self is but an abstract principle, then we are confronted by the fact that the abstract can exist only where the self has been at work. Such considerations seem to lead to the conclusion that the self is the ultimate fact of our experience, a unity which no process that we can imagine is able to dissolve. Are we, then, to suppose that the decay of the bodily organism which is the instrument of the self must also mean the dissipation of the self? Surely not. It is strange, but true, that the old argument for the immortality of the soul—the argument which holds that the soul, being an ultimate unity, cannot be dissolved—has come back to some modern minds in a new form.

Yet when we endeavour to think out this immortality, do we find it satisfying? Is this self, in its naked isolation—when the body has been dissolved into its elements—a mere thinking principle, or what is it? We know the self only as we have it in our earthly experience.

Here it is, in truth, a name for our experience regarded in a certain way. But how can we eliminate the bodily organism from this experience and leave it any coherence? The bodily organism takes its place in this experience as a mediating agency—an agency by which experience comes to be what it is, an agency by which all the fullness and variety of our life is possible. Get rid of the bodily organism, and colour, sound, sensation in every form must vanish. Get rid of the bodily organism, and desire which forms the raw material of the will, and therefore of that ceaseless effort which is of the essence of our spiritual existence, must either disappear or be greatly limited.

There are able scientific minds in our day who believe that there is evidence of the existence of a spirit-world. Neither accepting nor rejecting the conclusions which have been drawn from certain observations, it is strangely interesting to find that all the facts which are available seem to point to a condition of spiritual existence in which contact with the world is possible only with great difficulty and by the instrumentality of the living organisms of persons who are in some way specially fitted to give such assistance.

It would be obviously vain to build a doctrine

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of the future life on such a foundation as these considerations supply. We can, however, safely come to this conclusion, that a disembodied state of existence cannot be regarded as an end which would meet the needs either of our hearts or of our capacities. It can be one or other of two things : either the persistence for, probably, a limited period of that inter-related system of thoughts and purposes which forms the centre, or rather framework, of our conscious personality ; or a state of waiting for a fuller and larger life under other conditions. For those who regard the question from a purely psychological point of view the former alternative has a certain degree of probability. But for those who believe, either on religious or philosophical grounds, that the self is something more than a psychical ganglion, the latter alternative is irresistible.

It appears, then, that modern philosophy and psychology are not inconsistent with the faith that there is a life after death, continuous, in some way, with our present existence, but that, so far as we have been able to see, they afford no means of conceiving such a life as eternal in a manner which can satisfy our hearts or meet the demands of our intelligence.

It seems as if any further satisfaction as

regards this great question can be attained only by a great act of faith, reaching out towards that which our merely logical processes fail to grasp. But such a faith is mere dreaming unless it can be shown to be the completion required by our deepest needs and our best experiences. If any doctrine can give us all that our nature demands and at the same time shed light upon human history, we feel that the faith which receives it is not one to be despised. Now the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection as interpreted by St. Paul is able to fulfil these conditions. Nor does it seem that St. Paul's treatment of the great question has received a full measure of justice, in relation to modern thought and the conceptions which have emerged in modern philosophical studies.

There are four passages of special interest in this connection in St. Paul's epistles. Of these we need, for our present purpose, refer to two only: 1 Corinthians xv. and 2 Corinthians v. The former is well known. In it the apostle sets himself the question, "How are the dead raised? With what manner of body do they come?" His answer depends on a distinction between the natural body—the body which corresponds to the needs of the

Ψυχή—and the spiritual body—the body which corresponds to the πνεῦμα. Out of this distinction arises a doctrine. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." There shall be a great change. The corruptible shall put on incorruption, the mortal shall put on immortality. "Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

This whole treatment of the question is based by St. Paul on the principle—a principle which he illustrates with a great variety of instances—that God provides for every manifestation of life its own fit embodiment. As the natural life has a bodily organ adapted to its purposes, so the spiritual life—that higher mode of existence to which man has attained—must have its appropriate means of expression. This surely is a consideration of great weight and importance.

Now, there is one word here which is worthy of our special consideration: the word rendered "put on." "The corruptible must 'put on' incorruption, the mortal must 'put on' immortality." The higher life is to be like a garment completely enveloping the lower, and, it is added, transforming it. If this idea went

no further we might regard it as a device of literary expression and nothing more. But when we turn to 2 Corinthians v. we find that it has become the leading conception. "We know," says the apostle, "that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven, if so be that, being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For, indeed, we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life." Here the resurrection-body is regarded as an envelope, a garment, or a habitation already prepared—if we interpret the language with pedantic strictness—an envelope to be put on over our present earthly body, and which, in the putting on, shall completely transform the earthly. "What is mortal"—that is, the mortal state of existence—shall be "swallowed up of life."

We have here, presented with great clearness, the elements of all those considerations which have been occupying our attention—the transitory and unsatisfying character of

our present bodily life. The earthly tabernacle is in danger of being dissolved: it is, indeed, in process of dissolution; for we must take the words in connection with the preceding passage in the close of the fourth chapter. "Our outward man," says the apostle, "is decaying." Further, the life in the flesh is a life essentially dissatisfying. In it we groan, longing for something better. We groan, being burdened; and the burden which weighs us down is the burden of mortality, of ever-present and ever-active death. Yet we do not desire to be stripped of bodily life, to be left naked. That is, we cannot find our satisfaction in a disembodied state. Such a condition must be one of deprivation —a life lacking fullness, content, variety. We long, not to be unclothed, but "clothed upon." We need, that is, a life fuller, richer, more various than the life in this world, not a life emptied of such content as we have here.

There is in this conception a perfect correspondence with all those needs which reach out towards a future beyond the bounds of our present experience. How often, when confronted with the infinite variety of nature, or the immense pageant of human history, or the endless array of interests evoked by science, art, and literature, do we feel the need of higher

powers, greater grasp of detail, a larger capacity for sustained reflection. Or, again, in practical things, how fascinating would be the work of life if only we had faculty enough. Such thoughts as these alternate with those which find the path of duty a dreary, dusty highroad. Yet has not modern mechanical science taught us that a new mode of locomotion may make the mere passage of the highroad a thing of delight? The journey which is misery at three miles an hour becomes, for many, bliss at thirty. Even from such simple considerations as these, is it not clear that what we really need for our satisfaction is not less of life, but more, not fading away into dim forgetfulness, but attaining to larger powers, and therefore to a life richer, fuller, and more various in its hold upon reality.

Now, here is St. Paul's conception of immortality. The great life of the future, he teaches, will come about as the supervening, upon this life, of higher conditions of existence. Mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The higher shall descend upon the lower and transform it. All that belongs to this world, the limited, the imperfect, but the real life we possess here, shall not be lost, but, rather, assimilated and transmuted in that higher state of being.

St. Paul's thought holds to the conception of the heavenly body, the house not made with hands, eternal, belonging essentially to the higher order of things. This it is which is to clothe us and so transform our life. To modern thought, this way of expressing his doctrine may seem bizarre, and out of harmony with scientific ideas. Yet, surely, the body is the characteristic expression of the life which we now have. Nor can the body be separated from that life. It sums up the conditions essential to our present existence. If there is, then, such a higher life as St. Paul describes, how better, I would ask, can its nature be presented to us than in terms of the body which belongs to it? The change from the lower to the higher must take place by means of a process which may be called *realisation*, the change from the relatively imperfect to the relatively perfect, from the problem to its solution, from the question to the answer, from the need to its satisfaction. Now, if there is, in God's vast universe, this glorious answer to the age-long human question, there must, in the higher life, be something corresponding to the body—that central and characteristic agent of our experience. St. Paul is not wrong, then, when he takes the spiritual body, as he names

it, as the symbol of the great new life. Yet that his thought travels beyond the mere idea of a body is evident from the way in which he varies the imagery by which he conveys his meaning. This body is a garment which is to clothe us; it is a tent to cover us; a house or habitation for us to dwell in. He piles up his metaphors; for what he is conveying to us is the conception of a whole new order of being, higher in the scale than our present life, an order in which all that we know here shall find its realisation. This life is to it as dream to awakening, as shadow to substance, as twilight to the glory of noon.

Such a conception as this is, of course, transcendent: it reaches out towards an object which lies beyond the range of our inspection and the grasp of our imagination; yet we feel at once that only in the direction which it indicates can lie the heaven which can satisfy the needs of our nature. But the question which arises at once is this: How can such a doctrine meet the demands of the reason? Can our thought bring it into intelligible relation with what we know of the laws which govern our experience? Surely it can; and is not all that is deepest in the philosophy of our age pointing to such a solution of the problem of existence?

There has emerged slowly, in modern thought, the idea of *degrees of reality*. The real as contrasted with the unreal does not yield as accurate a distinction as the more real contrasted with the less real. The presence of contradiction does not mark the false, but rather the incomplete. When the contradiction has been overcome a higher degree of reality has been attained. So, again, the abstract is less real than the concrete, and the greater the degree of concreteness the higher the degree of reality. The most real thing we know directly is our experience, and it is the most concrete, for it includes all that we know. Yet this experience cannot be the highest form of reality, because when we view it in relation either to the world or to other men's experience, we are involved in contradiction. So we may express the age-long conflict between free-will and necessity, between will and will, between good and evil. So also must we interpret the helplessness of philosophy to form a completed system. There must, if the path which our thought is bound to follow leads anywhere, be a higher reality in which these contradictions find their solution. Far beyond our ken, there must be a mountain-peak of vision from which it becomes clear that all the confusions and contradictions of our limited

minds and imperfect experiences melt away in the final harmony of the universe.

The one doubt that assails us here is the suspicion that the individual human being may be too insignificant in the whole vast scheme of things to have any conscious share in the final glory.

Here Christianity comes to our aid and gives us two contributions of inestimable value, both of them, when viewed aright, in strict agreement with the principles of modern thought.

The first is a great conviction as regards the trustworthiness of God, and His care for the individual. All our science is based ultimately on the principle that the Power which lives and works in the universe is trustworthy. All our conduct of life presupposes that certain values possess an absolute worth. Apart from these great confidences our whole existence falls in ruin about us. And the conscious individual, possessed of moral capacity and moral character, has emerged at the end of the vast natural evolution, and is aware of the absolute worth of his own moral decisions. Can we believe that, in that ultimate form of life in which all creation is to find its realisation, there will be no place for him? If God has spent all the ages of time producing the perfectly individualised

moral life, are we to suppose that in the eternal realisation of the whole process this supreme product is to disappear? It is surely impossible, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. He is, as Christ teaches, "our Father."

Secondly, Christianity has given us a great fact. The one perfect life ever lived on earth was able to convey to men the conviction that it had triumphed over death. It was the boundless hope inspired by this conviction which sent forth the Christian Church upon her career of conquest. And as it was faith in the Risen Christ which gave the Church her first great inspiration, so in all ages of her history she has found an unfailing source of power in the belief that the Living, Risen Christ is with her. Every sign of renewed life in the Church is a fresh manifestation of Christ and the Resurrection.

## CHAPTER VIII THE TRINITY

TO many modern minds there is no doctrine of the Christian Faith which seems so surprising, so remote from all reasonable apprehension, so strangely unreal, as the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet the creeds and all the historic formularies make it fundamental. It is presented as the central and essential verity of all Christian belief and practice.

How, in the world of to-day, with its changed outlook and its scientific methods of thought, can such a dogma be maintained?

In our discussion of the fact of Christ we were led to see that, having regard to the order of events disclosed by the scientific view of the creative process, the Supreme Principle manifested in the universe is revealed as the Power which, subduing all material forces to the uses of the spirit, making them subserve the advent of feeling, thought, knowledge, will, truth, love, faith—all the elements that go to the making of true humanity—finally summed up all that is best in human nature in a single Person.

Humanity thus perfected becomes the highest expression of Divinity to which our minds can attain. Here is the spiritual at its best, the highest that we can know. All that our minds can grasp of being in its very highest and most perfect form is summed up in personality as revealed in one supremely good Person.

Yet the question can be raised. Is personality the ultimate form of being? Is it even a sufficient explanation of the order we can observe in the world about us? For it does not follow that, because we can imagine nothing higher than a perfect personality, there is therefore nothing higher in the whole universe. As a matter of fact, when, without adopting any metaphysical theory, we view the world as we know it through history and experience, we find many things in it which are very difficult to reconcile with the belief that it is the expression of a perfect personality. The creed which traces all things and events ultimately to One Sole Creator, conceived as a Single Person, is a very difficult creed. Monotheism in this shape is beset with problems which all the efforts of philosophers throughout the ages have failed to solve. It is the multitude of seemingly inconsistent, and often opposing, agencies and elements in the world which, as we have seen,

gives to every form of polytheism its persuasiveness. How else could this confused and confusing world explain itself to the simple mind of primitive man? The fierce lion suggests a lion god, the monstrous crocodile a crocodile god, the cunning jackal a jackal god, the lurking snake a snake god or goddess; and, as thought rises, the mighty sun in the heavens suggests the sun god, glorious in his brightness and strength; and so the interpretation of natural things constructs a sort of theology, in which the various elements are more and more humanised. And when there emerge warring conceptions like those of light and darkness, good and evil, the contradictions of man's life are translated to a higher sphere.

We have already traced this development sufficiently for our purpose, and seen how, in spite of the persuasiveness of polytheism for the primitive mind, the great monotheistic Faith—most perfectly presented in the spiritual consciousness of Israel—triumphed over the surrounding idolatries, and, after many a hard struggle, assumed the shape which was the necessary preparation for the mission of Christ.

Many of the oppositions and confusions which led the primitive mind to its belief in distinct, and more or less warring, divine powers, do



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not trouble our modern understandings, because we have grasped the scientific conception of natural forces. But there are some contradictions which remain unresolved. There are difficulties which no scientific principle can explain or remove. The first and most urgent of these is the problem of evil. Neither science nor philosophy has been able to provide a solution. If, for example, on the basis of natural science, the whole universal order of things is regarded as a purely material system, the result, in relation to this problem, is that pain and moral evil are thrust out of the sphere of real existences, they become an unexplained residuum, a horrible by-product. Does such a doctrine make them, in the slightest degree, more explicable or more endurable? The torture of the cancer patient remains exactly where it was in the scale of personal values, the vice of the den of infamy loses nothing of its degradation in relation to normal humanity. Here, in fact, is a very signal instance of the helplessness of the materialistic view of the world to deal with the things which are of real urgency in the life of man.

Nor is any philosophic theory in better case. For when the effort is made to explain evil in the terms of any system of ideas, the whole

system breaks down. One method only has been devised to avoid this result, the doctrine that evil is an unreality which must be resolved in the ultimate harmony. But this is not a solution, because if evil as now existing in the world is not inconsistent with the ultimate harmony of the universe, why should it ever cease? Eternal torture on this theory may be an essential element in the eternal felicity of the Absolute. Or, as certain mediæval theologians of repute maintained, the eternity of the pains of hell may form, even in contemplation, a part of the happiness of the redeemed.

A milder and less logical religion finds in a vague belief in the love of God, supreme in the universe, a hope that pain and sin will not only vanish when God's will is fully accomplished, but that they will be found, through the overcoming of them, a means of higher blessedness for all creation. It is a gracious and lovely belief, but no one can say that it can be presented as more than a venture of faith and hope.

The truth is that evil is an element in human experience which cannot be explained on the principles which we call reason. And reason is, for us, the application to the facts of experience of that unifying agency which we

find in ourselves, and which is, in the last resort, the fundamental unity of personality.

The problem of evil is the most outstanding instance of an antithesis which runs through all our experience. The individual can never be completely reconciled with the whole. Man finds himself in a world in which he is always trying to bring himself and his environment into harmony, and yet he never succeeds in accomplishing the task. In the physical realm he finds himself confronted with a vast material universe which goes its own way regardless of his desires. Through the discoveries of science, he is able to some degree to recognise an order in the way in which things happen, and even, as a result of this discovery, to direct the course of events for his own advantage, in the very limited sphere of his immediate surroundings. But his greatest efforts are a mere scratching of the surface, in comparison with the size of the material world on which he lives and moves. They are less than nothing in relation to the immensity of the physical universe. It is true that, as Pascal said, " though the universe were to crush man, yet he is greater than the universe because he would know that he was being crushed." If he be a worm, he is yet a worm that thinks.

All such aphorisms express a fundamental truth. But they do not affect the other truth which we are now considering, that when man, as a being possessed of material organs and using material powers, comes to deal with his material environment, he finds himself confronted with a vast order of things and events which only to the most limited extent can be subdued to his wishes and harmonised with his purposes. As a matter of fact, the physical universe gives to man the use of one little speck, so far as we know, among the millions of worlds, and even on that one little speck gives him but a short and precarious tenure, as compared with the millions of millions of years which measure the life of the stellar systems. So far as science can tell us, the conscious life of man is like the strange, brief glow of some alien fire which gleams out for a few moments and then passes for ever. Thus the mind and will of man, important as they are in the limited economy of his own life, seem to be without meaning or consequence in the whole vast material order of things.

Further, the relation of the individual to human society involves a very similar opposition. It is an opposition which is the source of all our moral and social disorders. As a person

each man is a self. The nature of his consciousness is such that he must bring every thing and event in his experience into relation with this central fact of his being. He has no other way of knowledge, no other spring of conscious action. In the realm of knowledge this means that the individual point of view cannot be avoided. However powerful the force of public opinion, or the urge of the herd instinct, these mental forces must act through the individual conscious agency.

In the realm of conduct, selfishness may be said to sum up all evil deeds in human history. When the self puts itself into opposition to the common good, claiming its "good" for itself alone, it is evil. That is the very essence of the moral fault. Thus it comes to pass that good conduct involves the continual overcoming of a tendency which springs from the very constitution of man's knowing and willing faculty. That is the origin of the tremendous moral struggle which has marked the whole history of man's life as a social being. The moral problem consists just in this: how to subdue man's self-regarding instincts and tendencies to the common good?

Thus, from whatever point of view we regard man as a personal being, whether in relation to the

world of nature or of social existence, we find ourselves confronted with a deeply rooted contradiction between the individual and the whole. The only possible explanation of this fact, in the opinion of the writer, is that, both in theory and in practice, the thought of man does not go deeply enough into the heart of reality. The principle of personality is not ultimate : there must be some unifying principle beyond the reach of man's conceptions. If there is to be any final consistency in the whole realm of being, there must be a unity higher in order than the unity which we find in man's mental constitution.

The ancient artists had no difficulty in conceiving forms of impressive majesty or beauty for the gods of popular belief. Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, Athena, could be conceived and expressed in shapes which remain to our day models of splendid art. The reason is clear. These deities were not conceived otherwise than as splendid examples of humanity—humanity exalted to a higher plane and endowed with superhuman powers. When, at the Renaissance, the inspiration from the antique world stirred to life a new artistic impulse of strong creative potency, all the great personages of the Christian tradition were seized upon as

subjects for treatment. The unsurpassed charm and power of the results of this new impulse are known to all. The successes achieved were amazing. The galleries of Florence, Rome, Venice, and many other cities witness to their abiding quality. But there is a limit to the success. The great artists could conceive and create noble representations of the Madonna, of apostles, prophets, and martyrs ; but they never quite succeeded in producing a satisfying countenance for Christ. On very rare occasions the attempt was nearly successful. For many, the Christ of Titian's "Tribute-Money," the famous picture at Dresden, comes nearest to a realisation of the ideal ; but the blurred vision of the face in Leonardo's "Last Supper" remains the symbol of a world-wide failure.

More impressive still is the impossibility of a pictorial representation of God the Father. The most famous effort is that by Michael Angelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. So mighty a master could not but create an impressive figure. In the Creation of Man, God appears as a noble human form, sustained in space by a group of angelic beings. His face is marked by strong and concentrated attention, while He stretches out His arm towards the earth, where Adam reclines, just called into

existence and reaching out his left arm so that his finger almost, or just, touches the extended finger of the Creator's right hand. No one can look on this picture without feeling the loftiness of its spiritual purpose and the splendour of its conception and execution. In the Creation of Woman, God appears as a majestic human form with a flowing beard, robed to the feet, standing upon the earth, while, with uplifted right hand and slightly bent head, He calls up the first woman from the side of the sleeping man.

These are, it would seem, the greatest representations of the Divine Being to be found in pictorial art. Quite common are the less noble representations which show the three persons of the Trinity, or which endeavour to depict the Heavenly Court in which God the Father sits enthroned above all powers; or which show Him crowning the Blessed Virgin as Queen of Heaven.

It is profoundly interesting to turn from all these pictures to the passages in the Bible, whether in the Old Testament or in the New, which refer to the possibility of seeing God. It is clear, after careful study, that in the former it was no mere reaction against heathen idolatry that made the Hebrew mind shrink from all

visual representation of God. There is throughout a profound sense of His mysterious inaccessibility. Visions to the patriarchs are indeed mentioned, and the simple statement "the Lord spake" is often made; but it is clear that the conviction throughout is that no Form was revealed. Of Moses, Aaron, and the seventy elders it is said that "they saw the God of Israel" (Exod. xxiv. 10). And of Moses that "the Lord (Jahveh) spake unto Moses face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend." Yet belonging to the same stratum in the narrative is the explanatory statement. "And he said, Thou canst not see My face; for man shall not see Me and live." And then follows that strange scene in which Moses is covered by the hand of God in a cleft of the rock while the Divine glory passes by (Exod. xxxiii. 20. 23). And so, in Deuteronomy, it is said, "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of form on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire" (Deut. iv. 15).

And as in the Old Testament, so in the New. St. John declares in his preface, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). And in St. John's

First Epistle it is again affirmed that "no man hath seen God at any time," but, it is added, "if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us." The vision of God is within. And, finally, in the First Epistle to Timothy, occurs the magnificent description of God, as "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see" (1 Tim. vi. 16).

This great conception, which we find both in the Old Testament and in the New, means, not merely that we are not to think of God as visualised in a certain face and form, but that His nature, in its ultimate being, is above and beyond all human expression. How magnificent, how profound, how true to all that our deepest apprehensions of spiritual experience convey to our minds is this teaching of Holy Scripture. How poor in comparison is even Michael Angelo's greatest effort! Think of the "still small voice" speaking to the prophet as, with his face wrapped in his mantle, he stood at the mouth of the cave in the wilderness of Sinai. Like Moses at the bush, he hid his face, for he feared to look upon God. What is this but the consciousness of an impossibility! "Verily

Thou art a God that hidest Thyself," cries the prophet (Isa. xlv. 15). And so Job cries out "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him; that I might come even to His seat!" But then comes the realisation of the impossibility of a face to face access. "Behold I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand when he doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him. But He knoweth the way that I take" (Job xxiii. 3, 8–10).

No wonder that, with such thoughts of God, the prophets poured out ridicule and scorn upon the makers of idols, the artificers who took wood or metal and produced images of their gods for worship. A man hews down a cedar, he takes a part of it for the fire, he roasteth roast and is satisfied; "he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire; and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god" (Isa. xliv. 14 *ff.*).

Even a superficial reading of the prophecy of which these words are part will show that the prophet was led to his bitter satire of the

art of idol-making by his sense of the incomprehensible greatness of God. A new vision of God's greatness had been revealed. Both as Creator and as Lord of all the earth and Master of all nations, the thought of God in this fresh conception of Him had proved overwhelming. Language is exhausted in the effort to convey the impression. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out the heavens with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? . . . Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All the nations are as nothing before Him: they are counted to Him as less than nothing and vanity. To whom, then, will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?" And then follows another satiric account: this time of the casting of a molten image and of the goldsmith covering it with gold.

If it was possible for the prophets of Israel of old to rise to such lofty thoughts of God's nature, how much more should we of to-day

be able to realise that none of our human concepts are sufficient. There are two reasons which should be especially effective in this respect. First, the revelation of the greatness and complexity of the universe made by modern science ; and secondly, the signal failure of all the theological systems which were based on the conception of God as ultimately personal, and only personal. With the first of these reasons we need not now concern ourselves. The second, when its force has been understood, will open the way to the very heart of the problem.

The most completely logical system of theology which the mind of man has produced is, it is not too much to say, that body of articulated dogmas which is commonly called Calvinism. Closely connected with the theology of Augustine, it is far more consistent within itself than the speculations of that too affluent mind. Far be it from the writer to venture to criticise in any detail a system which has occupied the close attention of generation after generation of the most subtle minds, and which has given rise to discussions penetrating most deeply into the foundations of "knowledge, will, and fate." But it is perhaps safe to say that the conception of Divine Decrees issuing from the Sovereign Will of God—even though

that will be not supposed arbitrary, but as giving expression to its inherent righteousness and goodness—was bound, in this world of sinful and suffering beings, to lead to contradictions that could not be resolved.

Surely it is clear that if the world be the expression of one sole perfect intelligent Creative Will, it must form a perfectly articulated whole. Any imperfection in the expression of the Creative Will means an imperfection in the Will itself. By the introduction of created beings possessed of will in any real sense—and Calvin maintained human freedom—the Creator limited the expression of His own perfection in His creation. Nor is the situation saved by denying the freedom of the will, for then the Creator becomes directly responsible for all the sins of all the generations. The Calvinistic doctrine, if I understand it aright, is that men are saved by the free grace of God, but that sinners are condemned by their own acts. That is a more reasonable doctrine, but it does not avoid the supreme difficulty. For did not the Creator bring into being creatures, endowed indeed with moral faculty, but with strong instincts, and set in circumstances in which the force of temptation was overwhelming? And, if the scientific account of

human origins be granted, we find man, in his feeble beginnings, placed in a world in which nothing but fierce struggle could carry him through. When men thought of a saintly Adam, with pure heart, sustained in virtue by the frequent presence of God, it was easier to regard man's fall as a yielding to temptation which he might have overcome. But, even so, what about the descendants of the fallen pair? Inheriting a nature with inborn tendencies to sin, the Creative Power continued to bring them into a world in which evil forces had obtained enormous powers, and then, when their wills proved unequal to the strain, condemned them to endure the consequences.

The real problem is the antithesis between Divine Will and human will. If human will be a real power of choice, a true self-determination, then it must introduce into the world an element of contingency which can by no means be reconciled with the conception of the Divine Will, sovereign in the universe, and ordering all things after its own perfect counsels. If this conception of the Divine Nature is to be sustained, then it must appear, not only that this is the best of all possible worlds, but that it is a world in which every event, every element, every historic sequence is perfectly ordered.

But the truth is that in all this we take the conception of "will" as we find it in man, we exalt it, in our imagination, to the throne of the universe, and then find ourselves in difficulties. We have created God after the likeness of men, and are surprised that the image does not satisfy us. This has been dimly felt by most makers of theological systems. There has generally been somewhere, in the background of their thought, a feeling that in God we must be prepared to find something of the inscrutable. Even Calvin, most severely logical of all theologians, finds it necessary to trace the reasons which determine the Divine election of some to life, to an ultimate inscrutability in the purposes of God's Will.

Pondering deeply on this great problem which gives instability to the foundations of all theological systems, it surely becomes clear that the difficulty is caused by attributing to God, in His ultimate nature, a Personal Will similar, though infinitely greater in scope, to that personal will which we find in ourselves. We think, in fact, of God as a Person in the same sense in which we think of each man as a person. The only difference is that we try to bring His Personality into relation with the whole universe. It may perhaps be put in this way:

when we are thinking of creation, Divine providence, universal and final destiny, we reason as if we were Unitarians. It is only when we think of our Lord Jesus Christ, in those offices which we regard as peculiarly His, or of the Holy Spirit in His offices, that we become Trinitarians in our conceptions. In our thoughts of God there is a continual wavering between these two diverse manners of regarding the Divine Nature.

One supreme truth shines out upon us from the history of human thought and from all our deepest convictions about the universe in which we dwell—the Supreme Power is One. Only on this basis can we think at all. There must be an ultimate consistency in things. We must believe in the universe as a universe, and, therefore, hold that it manifests One Universal Order. And here it is worthy of note that the modern scientific account of creation in all its phases, revealing a connected series in the long succession of emergent beings, adds strength to this conviction. Further, this Ultimate Unity must surely be higher in the order of being than any other form of unity. It must be higher than the unity of a chemical compound, higher, again, than the unity of a living organism, and, rising still further, we must

believe that it is higher even than the unity of a Personal Self. If its unity were only that of a personal self, it would be but one among many. It would therefore appear that the unity of the Supreme Power, the final unity of Being, may well include within itself distinct Personal Unities. Further, as the Ultimate Unity must be beyond the grasp of our thought, it can only be by personal manifestations that the Supreme can reveal Himself.

If this line of thought has any validity, we may well find in that perfect and holy Person who appeared in time, and in whom we discern the summing up of all that is best in our humanity, the revelation of God to man ; or, to use the ancient language of a theology which has never grown old, the Incarnate Word of God. And, again, we can discern in that Divine guidance which has directed human thought ever upwards through the millenniums of man's life on earth, and which led the great prophets of Israel to their sublime vision of God, the agency of Him whom we call the Holy Spirit.[1]

Now, we cannot, in the ideas which belong to our thought, find any way of describing the

[1] A hasty reading might lead the critical theologian to suspect " tritheism " in the above statement. The true effect is exactly opposite, because a super-personal Unity must be far more concrete in its inclusiveness than a personal Unity.

Ultimate Unity which must be in God. But in our experience there is certainly one element whose very nature is such that it can pass beyond the limits of personal distinction and produce a harmony in which personal beings can be united. That element, that principle, is Love. Love, when it is true, binds in one the multiplicity of personal lives. The essential fact of the personal life is the self, and all the activities of the personal life are centred in the self. Here is the divisive factor in moral relationships which defies all efforts at reconciliation. Here is the problem that no ethical theory has ever been able to solve. The self of the individual stands out in stark opposition to all altruisms. Only one power can truly conquer—the power of love. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Therefore it sums up all the commandments. And so in the great saying of St. John, "God is love," we find the only clue to the final mystery of things. For here is a principle which, passing beyond all logical expression, and using the best experience of which our humanity is capable, can really produce a unity which overcomes all personal distinctions.

This way of expressing the ultimate reality of the universe supplies the best clue to the facts of the situation as disclosed in our experience.

For, while reason fails to solve the tremendous problems of will, of sin, and of suffering, we find here the meaning of the failure. Reason fails because it is limited by the personal unity of the self, which it can never evade. But while we cannot explain these mysteries on any principle known to us, we can see in the fact that the ultimate solution is beyond us the cause of their existence. They are inscrutable, because our minds cannot rise high enough to deal with them. On the other hand, discerning that, in God, there must be a unity higher than any that our minds are capable of grasping, and finding in love the one reality known to us which can soar beyond our logical conceptions, we can by bringing together these two transcendent principles reach a Faith which enables us to confront with a good courage the overwhelming mysteries of our life. "God is love" is the highest point of revelation so far as it can be expressed in words.

Translated into the language which we derive from our moral experience, this Faith means that we must hold that the love of God, as the supreme principle in the universe, must ultimately overcome by its moral force all oppositions, and, winning a final victory over evil, bring in the Kingdom of God in its perfected

form. Thus the great Divine adventure will be crowned with eternal success. The last word of a true theology must be this: the omnipotence of God can be nothing else than the omnipotence of His love.[1]

[1] On the philosophical foundations for the above discussion, see the author's *God and Freedom in Human Experience*. Prof. Whitehead's view of "God as the principle of Concretion," *Science and the Modern World*, chapter xi, seems to present a closely related doctrine, arrived at in a different way. The difficulty which many find in following his thought arises, it would seem, from his fundamental position that the unit of reality is the event. This position marks a definite advance, in the direction of "concrete" thinking, as compared with the dealing with abstract elements which is traditional in our metaphysical, as well as physical, discussions.

## CHAPTER IX ADVENTURE

WHEN the great twelfth dynasty ruled over the land of Egypt, and the wise Hammurabi reigned in Babylon, there also lived one of the world's great adventurers. So it would seem, if our modern archæologists have rightly interpreted the evidence. Abraham, or Abram, chief of a nomad tribe, dwellers in tents such as the modern traveller sees in the Bedawin encampment of to-day, stands before us in the golden dawn of the history of Israel, a majestic and venerable figure. To us of the modern world Abraham appears encircled by the halo that is created by the mists of an immemorial antiquity. Yet, if we are right in our surmise, the world in which he lived was one which must have regarded itself as already old in wisdom and civilisation. For the Semitic rulers of Mesopotamia looked back to the older Sumerians as we look back to the Greeks and Romans ; and the greater monuments of Egypt were already many centuries, perhaps a thousand years, old. It was, therefore, a world not

so unlike our own as we are accustomed to think. Also, the wide deserts of Arabia were much the same as they are to-day, and the wandering Arab was there with his black tents. But it must be true, I think, that—at that epoch, which seems to have been an epoch of fresh expansion for the Semitic race, when the desert sent forth its conquering tribes to subdue kingdoms and found empires—Abraham represented, spiritually, the summit of the wave of human advance. He went forth, driven by a Divine impulsion, not knowing whither he was to go, but believing that the Divine impulse which sent him forth would lead him aright. It was, we are told, from Ur of the Chaldees, as it is called in Genesis, that he set out at the beginning of his journeys, in company with his father, Terah. Now, Ur is a place concerning which much information has been obtained in recent years. Only very lately we have been reading of remarkable discoveries there. An ancient Sumerian city, it seems to have been overwhelmed by the Semitic conquerors, under whom it became, for later times, Ur of the Chaldees, and this as part of that very migration of desert tribes to which the wanderings of Abram belong. Somewhere on the desert edge of Babylonia, near the ancient city of Ur, lived

the clan which moved north-west to Harran, and then, under Abram as its chief, westward into Canaan.

Who that reads and ponders the history of the people who looked back to Abraham as their father and founder, can doubt the truth of the ancient story which tells us that, animating this migration, and inspiring its leader, was a great faith in the Divine call. In those old days God called this man to a great adventure, and forth the man went, not knowing whither, but led by the light that shone within his soul. And thus was founded that people and that faith which gave to the world the great monotheistic creed, the national hope which became the hope of mankind, the long line of prophets whose spiritual insight and vision raised the religion of Israel from height to height of ever purer and nobler attainment, and finally provided the setting for the coming of Him who is the light of the World.

Every great history in the world begins with a story of adventure. Homer sang of Troy. The stories of Odysseus and the Argonauts lie behind all the traditions of Hellas. Rome looked back to Romulus and Remus, and in later times her greatest poet linked her destinies with those of a fugitive hero from Troy. Here

in the West we look back to Arthur, to Charlemagne, to Alfred, and to the more misty heroes of Celtic legend. Something of history, something of primitive imagination, inspires all these tales. Taken all together, they show that the joy and thrill of adventure lie behind all history. But this, I think, can be said of the tale of Abraham in Genesis, that it stands forth with a truth and significance which is all its own, and a value for religion which cannot be paralleled among the early records of humanity. Here is an adventure of faith, with a Divine impulse behind it, and the promise of blessing for all humanity as its goal. For is it not recorded that the promise to Abram was summed up in the words: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed"? How wonderful it is, in this ancient pre-Christian history, to find this reference to world-wide blessing! However these words be interpreted, they mean that Abraham was to stand as the type of Divine blessing for all nations and generations of men. A wanderer on the earth —a man with no settled habitation—he receives the promise of a great future for his race, and of blessing that is to come, through him, to all mankind. This is the foundation for the great saying of the Epistle to the Hebrews,

" He looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Inspiring his great adventure was faith in an enduring order of things contrasting with the uncertainty of his wandering life.

It is of the essence of the modern scientific view of the world to regard the life of every living thing as an adventure. Wherever we look we find creatures of every degree, from the minutest speck of protoplasm to the wisest of men, making their way in life by the method of trial and error. Every living thing, born into this world, finds itself confronted with circumstances which, somehow or other, have to be met and adapted, if possible, to the needs and innate qualities of itself. Forces—some friendly, some hostile, some neutral—must be encountered and either used or avoided, if the creature is to live and prosper.

In the higher grades, the tenderness of maternal affection guards for a time the young life in its struggle for existence ; but very soon the shelter of that larger experience is withdrawn, and the creature must go forth into the great world, like Abram of old, " not knowing whither," but trusting in the guidance of some instinct, as we call it—some inner impulsion—which makes it seek certain ends, and by

continual trial, and with many a blunder, endeavour to gain them.

It would help us very much, if, instead of thinking of the struggle for existence as a scene of cruel competition and ceaseless slaughter, we thought of it as a scene in which every living thing gets at least one adventure, one thrill of living, " one crowded hour of glorious life," and in which there comes to untold millions strange joys and wonderful successes which must surpass all their anticipations. For it is only to man, with his reflective mind and his power of imaginative pre-vision, that the keenest disappointments come. A true insight shows that the world is not nearly as cruel a place as our sentimentalists think, because it is full of the joys, and also the uncertainties, of adventure.

Here, I think, we get to the source of the delight which we all derive from tales of adventure ; whether it be the fairy-tales which entrance us in our infancy, or the magnificent epics which come to us from the splendid springtime of the greater races ; whether it be Homer, or the sagas of the North, or the *Thousand and One Nights* from the East, or the novels of Sir Walter Scott, or the more extravagant romances of a later time ; whether it be Dick Whittington and his cat, or King

Henry V. in Shakespeare's plays, or Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, or the more subtle, if less elemental, creations of our modern novelists and playwrights: it is the joy of adventure, welling up from the depths of an immemorial experience, an experience which stretches back, far behind even the ages of humanity, that creates the fascination which engages our attention so irresistibly.

Why do we follow with such close interest and even anxiety the fortunes of some imaginary youth setting out on the adventure of his life? Here is the theme which, treated with artistic power, never fails to enthrall us. But why? Just because youth confronted with life is the eternal problem of all the ages and generations, the problem which renews itself afresh with every living creature that comes into existence. Here is the one supreme elemental fact of experience, oldest and newest, most universal and yet most individual, in essence always identical, yet, in its variety of circumstances, infinite; and therefore as fresh to-day as when first man began to make it the theme of his imaginary creations.

We can now, I think, venture to go deeper. If God has so placed His creatures in this world that, in order to attain any excellence, they

must take their lives in their hands and venture forth into the unknown, facing perils without number, making mistakes innumerable, failing often to attain their end, yet sometimes attaining; if, further, this way of adventure is, as we know it is, the only way by which any degree of high accomplishment can be reached, whether in the physical realm or the moral, can we not draw some conclusion as to God's own relation to the world as a whole?

When we think of Him as the Universal Spirit, who is the Source of all created things, and their continual Life, and when we realise that He has imparted some degree of independent spontaneity to His living creatures, and in the highest degree to man, we must conclude that His purpose is to make His creatures fellow-workers with Himself in the production of the final result. Everything is not, then, settled beforehand. The world itself is a gigantic adventure. While the main lines of creation must have been pre-determined, the particular collocation to be realised—especially so far as it depends on the decisions of human wills—is to be brought about by the efforts of finite creatures in co-operation with the Divine.

Let us try to think this out more carefully.

Every living creature is an adventurer, and, among them, man is the greatest adventurer of all. We have seen that our world, as it exists to-day, is very largely the creation of man. Using his faculties of mind and body, and continually experimenting with the things he finds in the world about him, and ever seeking some fresh use for them in relation to his many needs, he has been able to take wood and stone and build himself houses and temples; to take copper, iron, and many other metals, and employ them for a hundred purposes; gold and silver for beauty and value; beasts to serve him, their flesh for food; vegetables and fruits of many sorts, and flowers for adornment.

So it is that he has built and furnished his great cities, and turned the countryside into a great farm, and changed the whole aspect of the world. This is all the work of man the adventurer. It is the result of continual trying. And when man is in pursuit of some new conquest of natural forces, he is ready to take endless risks. The older among us can look back to times when the average human life was a vastly more sheltered and guarded thing than it is to-day. We can remember when the bicycle was regarded as a dangerous innovation. Its ten or twelve miles an hour were a terror

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to the pedestrian. The motor and the aeroplane have changed all that. Risk counts for nothing. It adds, indeed, to the pleasure. More than ever, man is realising to-day that he is, first of all, an adventurer.

Further, the thrill of uncertainty adds zest to his effort. A perfection so mechanical in its certainty that failure became practically impossible would produce weariness and satiety. The ease with which perfected skill works always produces a tendency to new developments. It is only necessary to watch the growth of any popular game, and to observe how rapidly the expert players produce new phases, fresh difficulties to be overcome and new ways of overcoming them, to see how deeply the principle of adventure enters into all human life. Without adventure, life is stale and unprofitable; and it is the element of uncertainty which adds thrill to adventure.

When theologians, in their endeavour to attribute absolute perfection to God, insisted on the complete subjection of all things in heaven and earth to His will, and regarded that Will as having foreseen and settled everything from the beginning, they not only prepared the explosive which was bound to shatter their systems, but also they turned aside from the

most obvious of all the lessons that our experience of life has to teach us. It is quite clear, to anyone who looks at life with eyes unprejudiced by abstract conceptions, that the universal rule of creation is that living things are to work out their own salvation by plunging into the adventure of life and using all their powers to the best advantage. This it is which has pushed man onward along the path of progress, which has made man what he is, and gained for him such victories over adverse forces as he has achieved.

If we believe that there is a Divine purpose in the ordering of human life, we must find in this universal rule no unimportant part of God's will for man. Nor can we regard this will for man as something alien to God's own nature and method ; for all the revelations of science teach us to see the same rule operating everywhere in the realm of living things. Further, the outcome of the whole creative process depends upon the results of the age-long struggle, the age-long adventure.

It is, therefore, in harmony with what we observe of the whole ordering of nature to discern in God Himself the Supreme Adventurer. For if, in the end, the good is to triumph, it must be by means of the gradual ascendency

of the good in the wills of created beings, bringing their purposes into accordance with the purpose of God. Only in this way can the freedoms of the multitude of human wills be brought into co-operation with His will. And only thus can a moral universe be created.

We can imagine a Creator, designing to produce a universe in which every element must contribute to the making of a perfect order, so framing all the parts that none can go wrong. This is the kind of world conceived by theologians as that originally planned by the Almighty; yet disorganised by the sin of man. But those who think in this way forget that the only way to secure such a result would be to make the world a perfect mechanism from the start. Such a mechanical perfection, it is forgotten, would be a very poor affair compared with the world actually created; for it could never become a moral universe. In it there could be no true choice, no moral victory, no conquest by the good, no free response of the heart to the call of God, no love answering to love. A creator who took no risks could gain no great results. Only through risk and adventure can great moral and spiritual gains accrue.

It is therefore a far more splendid conception

of the Creative Power to regard Him as the Supreme Adventurer, taking vast risks with a view to the final attainment of the highest possible result, than to think of Him as ordering all things from the beginning and foreseeing the outcome of every event. When we think of God as the Supreme Adventurer, we must regard Him as one who, permitting the physical forces of the world to work themselves out to the full, and entrusting His creatures of higher order with moral attributes, so as to fit them to share with Himself the vast adventure of the ages, relies solely upon moral forces to gain the victory.

How splendid is the conception of human life which thus emerges! Man is called by God to share with Himself the great task of overcoming evil by the use of those moral powers which are the highest of spiritual endowments. How definitely this leads to the highest possible view of God's nature we have yet to see. But surely it is already clear that any conception of Him framed in accordance with principles lower than those of the widest possible extension of moral initiative and moral freedom throughout the universe, and in the relationship between the Creator and His creatures, is relatively unworthy.

Another consequence of this view of the relation between God and His creatures is that it involves the ennobling and consecration of the whole life of humanity. The tendency of much of the theological thought of the past was to divide human life into two parts, the secular and the religious. The latter was regarded as holy, the former as profane. The secular life included all the principal activities and occupations which fill a man's time and absorb most of his attention. Business, enterprise, even literary and artistic interests, as well as all sports and pastimes, belonged to it. To the religious sphere belonged prayers, study of sacred literature, devotional practices, charitable labours, public worship, taking some part in church work. And it is noteworthy that the exhortations to religious people to bring religion into the daily life, which are so frequent in the sermons of earnest preachers, seemed in the past usually intended to convey the impression that this can only be done by creating a constant association between the practices of the religious life and the regular conduct of business, pleasure, and social intercourse.

In the deepest sense, no religious mind dare dispute such teaching. The thought of God, prayer, and Christian principles should indeed

penetrate every part of our activity and experience. But if this teaching is given in such a way as to imply that the so-called secular life is, in itself, profane and earthly, having no essential relation to God and to the highest laws of man's being, then it is certainly misleading. It was this error which led to so much outward show of religious devotion as to encourage the most repulsive forms of hypocrisy. Here again was the root of that narrow pietism which turned away from art, music, literature, and science as things belonging to the evil world, which denounced all simple natural pleasures as godless, which denied to youth its joy and to age its intellectual consolations, and which left to the average man no resource, outside his religious observances, but the satisfaction of making money.

In our modern world, with its eager quests and its longing for fullness of life, there is no doctrine of more immediate importance than this, that the normal natural life of man, and the realisation of all that is true and sound in human capacities, form the sphere in which the Divine purpose for man is to be carried out. It is in the adventure of life, not in any cloistered separation from the risks of our earthly existence, that we are to be fellow-workers with God.

Here is the principle that will cleanse the life of adventure from the evils which so easily defile it. And it is the realisation of this truth that will enable the sincere soul to bring all that his Christian Faith has to teach him into the service of the great Ideal.

And what is the Ideal? Our Lord gives it to us in the words, "Seek first the Kingdom of God." And it is noteworthy that this great rule, which indeed sums up the ethical teaching of Christ, is given in connection with His charge to the anxious toilers for their daily bread. Looking with loving eyes upon the multitude of the world's workers, He tells them to forget their anxieties, trusting in the care of their Heavenly Father. But this is no exhortation to indolent slackness, for He crowns His teaching with the rule which most of all demands the complete devotion of human powers: "Seek first the Kingdom."

Does He mean that the world's workers should cease their toil and become missionaries of the Gospel? Surely not. There is a profound common sense in the mind of Jesus. When He needed missionaries, He chose "twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them forth." The meaning of the saying is clearly this, that every worker is to find the

Kingdom in the circumstances of his own life. All his work, no matter how simple or commonplace, is to be a seeking of the Kingdom. For the Kingdom is the Rule of God. It is the purpose of God coming to every human being, and calling him to the great adventure of life, not for mere bread-winning, but for those higher aims which, in some form or other, make their appeal to every soul that is not wholly earth-bound.

And the promise of Christ is that the worker who seeks the Kingdom will not be found lacking as regards the necessaries of life. Take a wide view and this is true. The honest soul who seeks to do the duty which circumstances mark out for him, proving himself a true man, does not lack. "All these things," said the Master, "shall be added unto you."

It is altogether in accordance with this that we find our Lord regarding, with His Divine sympathy, the common labours of men. He draws His illustrations from the farmer sowing his seed and reaping his harvests, from the fisherman with his boat and his nets, from the labourers and the vineyard, from the shepherd and the sheep, and from all the common doings and events of the countryside. He loves to look upon the sky and the earth,

the birds and the flowers. He mingles with men and women of all sorts! He loves children. He joins in the common festivities of the people, the marriage feast and the dinner-party. His was no cloistered religion, separated from the world of common things. In Him was no shrinking from contact with the sinful, suffering crowd of imperfect men and women. He loved them all. He drew near to them all. He touched the leper. He called the publicans and sinners: indeed, He showed quite clearly that He liked them better than the people who despised them. With Him the human touch never failed. His life is the plainest exposition of the meaning of the rule, "Seek first the Kingdom." And, until He reached His thirtieth year, He sought the Kingdom in the humble workshop at Nazareth.

Finding in Jesus Christ the Divine manifesting itself in our humanity, we must see in His life and death the supreme example of God's sharing with Man in the great adventure. In the life of Jesus the element of adventure is very striking. To suppose that He set out upon the work of His life with perfect knowledge of its certain success is to deprive the wonderful Gospel story of all reality. When He met those

subtle temptations in the wilderness ; when His own apostle presented that temptation which most of all stirred His soul to its depths, so that He turned upon Peter with the words, "Get thee behind Me, Satan" ; when in the Garden He cried out again and again in agony, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me" ; —are we to presume to say that He had the certain consciousness all the time of a swift triumph? To affirm this is to make the most tremendous of all tragedies into an unmeaning show.

True it is that we find in the recorded sayings of Jesus anticipations not only of His death, but of His resurrection. But these anticipations are not inconsistent with the sense of agonised uncertainty shown in the instances to which we have just referred. For of all great souls it is true that, in moments of vision, there come assurances of results, clear insight into consequences, prophetic forecasts, which are ultimately justified. But it is also true that, when the soul is shaken to its foundations by terrible experiences, doubt intrudes, the vision fades, and the bitter cry, "if it be possible," goes up to heaven.

Seeing in Jesus and His passion this partnership in one of the deepest of human experiences,

we realise more perfectly the truth of His humanity. We gain also, through Him, an exalted conception of the mind and heart of God. For only when we look on Calvary as the entering of the Divine into the very central struggle of the conflict of the good against the evil, the Supreme Adventure of the ages, do we give it its true place in man's history and experience.

## CHAPTER X DIVINE SUFFERING

IN all the greatest works of that wonderful art by which man learned to express his thought about himself and the world in which he lives, will be found sentences which penetrate very deeply into the heart of things. A few words ; that is all ; but there is magic in them ; they set us thinking out great problems, probing mysteries, dreaming dreams, conjuring up visions. It is a mark of the little books which form that Divine literature that we call the Bible that they are very rich in such sentences, and among those especially distinguished by this quality is the treatise of unknown authorship called the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Here is one of the most profound of its sayings : " It became him for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The words are so familiar through frequent hearing that their deeper meanings do not immediately dawn upon the mind. First, the appeal is to

our sense of the fitness of things : " It became him," it was in accordance with his nature or position. But who is He? He " for whom are all things and through whom are all things." God. No more splendid definition of God's greatness in relation to the universe could be framed. The emphasis here is on God's majesty, His universal power, His eternal purpose. The language is so simple that the vastness of its scope is veiled. " For whom are all things " —that is, the whole universe exists to carry out His all-embracing design. " Through whom are all things "—that is, He is the source of all the forces which sway the elements in creation. Another very remarkable feature of this account of God's nature and greatness is that it is quite as much in harmony with modern thought as with ancient. There are certainly some modern ideas, as there were some ancient, which could not find a place within the terms of this definition. No form of materialism, nor of pantheism, could be included. Nor could any view which regarded God as the personified spirit of the human race. But any truly spiritual conception of God which regards the whole universe as the sphere of his activity, any conception, that is, which finds the best clue to the nature of God and the meaning of the universe in

the higher parts of our own experience, in knowledge and will, and in our apprehension of the higher values—the good, the beautiful, the true—may be said to be in perfect agreement with this description of the nature of God. It expresses His immanence; that is, His creative energy in nature; because all things are "through" Him. It expresses His transcendence; that is, that quality of supremacy by which He is higher in the order of being than all created things; because all things are "for" Him.

Starting with this tremendous overwhelming conception of the greatness of God, the sentence declares that the winning of the salvation of mankind through the sufferings of Jesus Christ was becoming to—that is, in harmony with—this supreme majesty of God. The whole point of the argument is that the accomplishing of human salvation by means of a suffering Redeemer was especially worthy of the greatness of God. The idea of Divine greatness and the idea of the suffering Saviour are brought together as in some very marked way compatible.

We are very familiar with the idea of the suffering of the Saviour as the expression of the love of God. The appeal here is direct and

obvious. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." No words have stirred human hearts to the passion of repentance and brought to them the joy of forgiveness like these words. The love manifested in such a sacrifice is indeed felt to be a great compelling power. These words have echoed down the long centuries with their message of pardon and reconciliation. There is a heavenly fitness in them which gives them an irresistible appeal to the needy souls of men. And it seems clear that an important element in that appeal is the emphasis on the love of God, and the manifestation of that love in the suffering Saviour. This it is which enables the needy soul to escape from the crushing sense of the Divine holiness and power against which sin is realised as an offence. The sinner takes refuge from the terror of Divine greatness under the shelter of Divine Love.

How, then, are we to understand the saying of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Is it just a paradox uttered by a facile writer who, while thinking of Divine love, used language more applicable to power? The explanation is as impossible as it is unworthy. For in the very forefront of the saying is the wonderful description of Divine greatness in language most carefully

chosen and yet of extraordinary simplicity. There is no trace of the gush of careless eloquence, no phrase-making, no loose language. The prepositions of the Greek tongue are used with that exact precision which belongs to them. The Epistle to the Hebrews is, in style and language, the purest Greek in the New Testament. The thought and phrasing are marked by measure and restraint.

We must look more deeply, seeking to enter into the meaning of the whole passage of which the saying is a part. When we do, we find that the sentences which follow are explanatory. Saviour and saved are "all of one"—that is, it would seem, "of God." The Saviour "partook" of flesh and blood, because the human creatures whom He came to save are sharers in flesh and blood, that through death He might bring to nought the power of death. "It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren." These ideas must be connected with the conception of the nature of the Saviour, who, at the beginning of the Epistle, is described as Son of God, and as the "effulgence" of God's "glory and the impress of his substance," as One who is "better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they."

Also it is said of Him that " through Him " God made the worlds.

The range of ideas which we find here is, then, the following : God the Creator, through whose power, and for whose eternal purposes, all things had their being ; the Son, who expresses the nature and will of God, and who took human nature upon Him, partaking of man's flesh and blood, that He might save mankind ; man, God's creature, sharing flesh and blood with the incarnate Son, and accepted as belonging to the family of God ; the work of salvation accomplished through the suffering and death of the Son ; and this suffering and and death in accordance with the greatness of God.

When we have thus set forth the various elements of the argument with as much precision and clearness as possible, we may still feel some doubt as to why the emphasis is placed on the greatness of God. Insight into the true reason for this emphasis will, however, come when the combined effect of all the opening passages of the Epistle is connected with the passage under consideration. The writer has a splendid vision of the Divine purpose in creation, and of the expression of that purpose in the person of the Son. But the Divine purpose in creation was

not the mere exhibition of power: it was the production of a moral universe. In a magnificent quotation from Psalm viii. is expressed the place of man in the purpose of God, in spite of man's littleness and infirmity. But to carry out this great destiny, to lift man out of his degradation and sin, "to bring many sons unto glory," a great work of salvation had to be accomplished. And the greatness of God appears in this, that He did not shrink from the incarnation of the Son, the Son's partaking of flesh and blood, and His completion of His work through suffering and death.

It comes to this: it was infinitely more worthy of the Divine greatness that God should take upon Himself the full burden of the task, that He should count no cost too great, that the Incarnate Son should enter the world of sinful, suffering creatures, and, taking their nature upon Himself, endure every suffering, even death itself, to save them, rather than that God's glorious purpose of a moral universe, a family of children in whom to take delight, should be brought to naught.

It is clear, when we have reached this point, that the conception of greatness as an attribute of the Creator of the universe is assuming a moral quality. We have passed beyond the

thought of God as He " for whom are all things and through whom are all things," and have taken account of Him as the Great Divine Father who seeks to have children in whom He can be satisfied. But this transition is involved in the argument of the Epistle. It is also involved in the very nature of things. For it is impossible to consider the Creator apart from His creation ; and the moral purpose of the universe is revealed in the moral capacity which appears in the constitution of man, the highest point which, in our experience, creation has reached. Further, it is impossible to pursue this line of thought, in the light of the Christian revelation, without attaining to that point of view from which all Divine greatness is seen to be taken up into the supreme attribute of love. But the writer of the Epistle does not take this final step : his intention here is to emphasise the greatness of God.

In view of certain tendencies of thought, tendencies which seem inevitable, this emphasis on the greatness of God is of the utmost importance. For in all ages there is a scepticism which springs from the idea, or feeling, that God, the Creator of the universe, the " Infinite and Eternal," is too great to care for man. Man, that insect creature, swarming over the surface

of one of the smallest worlds in space, how dare he think himself an object of solicitude to the Supreme Being—if, that is, there be such a Being at all? So runs the modern version of the ancient doubt, in these days of almost incredible discovery as regards the nature and size of the material world. It is terribly plausible. The star Betelgeux is so great that, with its centre at the centre of our sun, it would fill all surrounding space far beyond the earth's orbit. If indeed there be a supreme Being to whom that star is but one out of millions of millions of His creations, are we to imagine that He regards us? Compared with Him, we are less than the creatures which inhabit a drop of water are to us.

The argument is perfectly sound, but on one supposition only—that God cares only for material bulk, or space-filling capacity. The star Betelgeux is nothing but a quantity of hot gas. The mind which judges things by their higher values will refuse to be overwhelmed by the thought of so much incandescent material. It is extremely interesting to the astronomer, because he has been able to measure it, and take its temperature. But, for the thoughtful mind, the most wonderful thing about Betelgeux is just this fact that the astronomer has been able

to do these things. In fact, the astronomer comes out of the adventure with all the honours. Our knowledge of the dimensions and temperature of this gigantic sphere of flaming gas is a very wonderful revelation of the mental power of the spirit of man. It is a splendid example to prove how infinitely higher in the scale the human insect is than any quantity of the material which provides him with organs and objects for use and enquiry.

We are constantly subjected to the tyranny of material magnitude. Our minds, conscious of the littleness of our bodily organs and physical strength in comparison with the huge masses of the material world about us, are easily intimidated. We forget how infinitely more important is quality than quantity. The volcano hurling out great blocks of stone and pouring forth floods of molten lava is a tremendous thing. But the smallest speck of living protoplasm is a miracle in comparison ; while the thinking man is whole worlds away in meaning and value, even though his life may be crushed out of him at any moment by some falling stone shot out by the senseless volcano.

The most fundamental faith of all true religion is that these huge, senseless things are, not only inferior to spiritual things in the order of being,

but that, when all things and all values are taken into consideration, they are, in the final meaning and valuation of the universe, subject to the spiritual. That is what all true belief in God amounts to. When this faith illuminates the heart of man, a great transformation takes place. In the light of spiritual purpose and meaning, all the great physical elements and contents of the material universe assume a new character. They are clothed with beauty, with splendour, with sublimity. The apprehension of beauty in the physical world is indeed the apprehension of a spiritual meaning of a special kind. The grandeur that we call sublimity is another special apprehension of spiritual meaning. In each case, it is the apprehending mind —partaking, as the believer in God must hold, to some degree in the nature of God Himself— that is able to discern the higher value. And so even the star Betelgeux—which, in itself, apart from all apprehension by faculties which have been awakened to spiritual values, is a mere uninteresting cloud of flaming gas—is clothed with the splendour of sublimity.

It is now necessary to consider the place of suffering in the life of man. Professor Wildon Carr, in a recent work,[1] tells us that theologians

[1] *Changing Backgrounds in Religion and Ethics*, chapter xi.

will have to reconsider the whole problem of pain. The idea that pain is retributive, he declares, can no longer be maintained. "To the physiologist and psychologist it is impossible to doubt that pain is a vital product as specific as sight, hearing, or touch, and, like these sensations, it is to be judged by its utility." Over the whole surface of the body there are "organs beneath the outer cuticle which, when stimulated, produce sensations of four differently qualified kinds. They are named the heat, cold, touch, and pain spots." . . . "The significance is clear. Pain is a biological factor with a distinct psychical function. It is not superposed or inflicted. . . . It is not disciplinary. It enters as a specific and positive element into the psycho-physiological scheme of living activity." The use of pain is to act as a signal of danger. Pain spots are unequally distributed. In some parts of the body they are almost entirely absent. In other parts they are very numerous: in the parts, that is, where a danger signal is most necessary, in order to prevent injury. "In the delicate conjunctiva of the eye they are the only form of sensitiveness."

On the ground of this discovery, Dr. Wildon Carr condemns in the most unqualified way the idea that the purpose of pain is punitive, "that

in the natural order it occurs as retribution for the transgression of nature's laws, and in the moral order subserves the disciplinary rule of the Divine Creator." This idea he holds to be responsible for " widespread and wholesale misery."

It is possible to go a very long way with Dr. Carr in his condemnation of methods of discipline and punishment which, in the past, were most shockingly employed, and justified on the ground that pain was intended to be the proper consequence of sin. The enlightened modern mind will also agree most heartily with him in his horror at the cruelties which most religions of the world have sanctioned with the idea that, in certain circumstances, suffering is pleasing to God. It is also perfectly clear that pain as a biological function is essentially useful in the economy of life. But, when all this has been said, there is surely a residue of fact which demands explanation. We have to examine this residue with due deliberation, remembering the age-long problems which cluster round it, and the immemorial habits of thought and custom which are involved.

To the mind of the East, conscious life is altogether evil in that it consists of two elements, pleasures and pains, and pleasures are all pains

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in the making, because we must lose them. It is surely clear that, though we must reject the psychology of this doctrine, it passes at a single stride beyond Dr. Carr's physiological argument. The pain in question here is not the pain of the thorn-pierced foot or of the injured eye. In human life, the pain of the tortured nerve is but a minor element, except in rare and special instances. Most human sufferings arise out of our higher capacities. It is because man looks before and after that he is capable of the worst of his pains. Anxiety, disappointment, fear, hurt affection, loss, poverty, unavailing struggle, social humiliation: these, the worst of his sufferings, come to man because of his higher powers, and they are infinitely more distressing than mere physical hurt. It may be truly said that every faculty has its corresponding pain.

Yet it is an error to think that there is more of suffering than of happiness in the normal life. As Dr. Carr points out, "pleasure does not offer to the biologist the same definite, positive, specific character which attaches to pain." Also, as he says, "pleasure-pain is not a true case of logical opposition. The one does not negate the other, for even pain may afford pleasure to the sufferer without losing its painful

character." Pleasure is a term with a very wide range of meaning. It cannot be included within very strict definition. Yet it may be truly said that pleasure accompanies the normal and perfect exercise of any living function. The least complicated illustration of this is perhaps to be found in the feeling we experience when awakening from a perfectly healthy, dreamless sleep. We have a sensation of leaving behind a state of existence characterised by pure enjoyment. That dreamless state is not a blank : it is probably the nearest approach in our experience to a condition in which our life consists in the mere performance of healthy natural functions, altogether uncomplicated by the intellectual and moral complexities of our waking existence. It thus would seem to afford a crucial instance. And, let it be noted, that any disorganisation of function injures the pleasure. If brain, heart, or digestive organs are working amiss, there is dissatisfaction, no matter how deep and dreamless the sleep may be. It is the perfect function that gives pleasure.

This consideration throws a very clear light on the sufferings of the sub-human animal world. The creatures of this lower order, while capable of acute physical pain, are not subject to those

sufferings which depend on the possession of the higher faculties, and these, as we have seen, are, in our human experience, the worst of all. Also, in the merely animal life the regular performance of the healthy, natural functions counts for more—infinitely more—than in the life of man, because the creature is absorbed in the action of the moment and is not much interested in the past and the future. Memory and anticipation certainly find a place in animal experience, but not at all to the same degree as with man.

These reflections are very consoling. We realise that, in nature, there is not the cruelty that sentimentalists often imagine. The idea of the struggle for existence, impressed upon our minds by modern conceptions of evolution, does not involve, as a necessary consequence, the view of nature as, throughout its age-long history, a scene of continual suffering. On the contrary, a just view shows that, while the struggle for existence undoubtedly forms one of the great moulding forces of progressive creation, the animal life of the world enjoys normally the simple pleasure which belongs to healthy, natural living, and that, as a rule, its pains are comparatively brief, and often, through their suddenness, but momentary.

With man it is otherwise. The exaltation of his faculties, and the complexities of his life, create a whole world of higher sensitiveness in which all his greater and more enduring sufferings are to be found. But are these sufferings to be regarded as punitive, retribution for the sins which he or his ancestors committed? That is a very common view undoubtedly. Instances can certainly be pointed out in which sin brings suffering. But is this suffering deliberately inflicted by God, in His providence, as punishment? During the Great War there were pulpit orators who thundered forth their denunciations of individual and national sin, and pointed to the sufferings then endured as the righteous retribution. But it is a curious fact that the problem which has most of all troubled thoughtful minds in ancient and modern times is that this principle of Divine retribution does not hold good. The sufferings of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked is the problem of the Book of Job, and of certain of the Psalms. The former reaches no conclusion but that the ways of God are too wonderful for man's understanding. The psalmist takes refuge in the wholesome conviction that ultimately the good will triumph under the just judgment of God.

In the New Testament there are two notable passages which deal with the problem, and in neither is there any support given to the idea that the sufferings which we witness in the world about us are to be regarded as inflicted by Divine Providence as punishment for the sins of the sufferers. In the first of these, we read that when Christ was told of "the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices . . . He answered and said unto them, Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered these things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." The idea that the sufferings which we witness in the world about us have some special retributive relation to sins committed by the sufferers is here definitely denied. The warning which follows points to a very different interpretation of the fact of suffering—the doctrine, namely, that suffering has to do with the whole discipline of the race.

The other passage referred to is in St. Paul's

Epistle to the Romans (viii. 20 *ff.*). This is the only real discussion in the New Testament of the problem of evil. And, brief though it be, it contains a doctrine of profound significance. The apostle writes, "The creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together (or with us) until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

It is very extraordinary how little recognition there is in the New Testament of that great puzzle which so filled the minds of the sages and psalmists of Israel. It would seem that the life and death of Jesus had so changed the attitude of the mind towards suffering that it was no longer regarded as the supreme curse, but as a blessed, and even a holy, thing. Suffering for Christ's sake became the mark of the saint and the martyr, and even Jesus Himself could say in the earlier and brighter days of His ministry, "Blessed are ye that

weep" (Luke vi. 21). But St. Paul, facing the whole vast problem as it affects all creation, presents a doctrine of startling power and largeness of outlook. His doctrine is this: taking the idea of vanity as the summing up of all the imperfections of created beings, he declares that the Creator subjected all His creatures to a life marked by vanity, or imperfection, so that the whole creation groans and labours in pain, with a view to an ultimate deliverance from "the bondage of corruption" into the glorious liberty of a higher state of being. That is, the present condition of things is a world-wide state of discipline through which is to be won a final perfection.

Here we pass beyond all idea of the suffering in this world as punitive, to the far higher idea of it as a state of preparation or formation through which all creation is to pass on its way to better things. And we all know, by our own experience of the moral struggle in daily life, how through conflict with difficulties, through efforts often painful, through the enduring of sharp suffering sometimes, man must win his way to any really high attainment. Indeed, the principle which St. Paul here asserts can be seen to cover that vast, age-long struggle for existence which modern science has declared

to be one of the principal means of progress in the realm of living things.

We are now in a position to turn back upon the great doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that it is in accordance with the greatness of God as Creator of the universe that He should make the Author of Salvation perfect through sufferings. When we interpret, in the only possible way, the lofty language in which the writer of the Epistle describes the relation of the Son to the Eternal Father—in terms, that is, of the Incarnation—a flood of light is thrown upon the whole problem. God, who brought into being the whole world of created things and who—that, through moral experience and discipline, there might emerge a Higher Order—subjected His creation to those conditions of imperfection through which alone moral and spiritual beings could be perfected, has not left His creatures to struggle unassisted, but, taking their life into Himself, sharing in their sufferings, has won for them a victory which will in due time be manifested. That is the splendid doctrine of this difficult passage. And surely, as we reflect upon it, we feel how much more splendid is the doctrine of God which thus comes to light than any conception of His nature which imagines that it is a derogation

from His glory to suppose that He, while pitying man in his misery, holds aloof in lofty isolation, too great to condescend so far.

It is because men's minds are deceived by the immensities of space and time, by size and mass, by traditional ideas of greatness as conceived in imperial courts, by the mean thought that greatness must show itself in aloofness, by a hundred false lights of this deceptive world, that they fail so often to rise to the glorious height of the true doctrine. It is, in truth, because our thoughts of God are so poor, so unworthy, that we fail so often to grasp the full meaning of the Incarnation.

In view of all this, it is very interesting to read the strong protest of a theologian of repute.[1] against the whole idea of any sharing in human suffering on the part of God. He declares that while the Father sympathises, the Son suffered, and that only in His manhood. "There is no suffering in God as such," he writes, "Sympathy, yes, indeed, overflowing sympathy . . . and Suffering, indeed, overflowing suffering in Christ, but as man, not as God." It is surely not too much to say that this sharp division of the Person of Christ into two separable entities, so that one suffers while the other abides in

[1] Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, second series, chapter vii.

untroubled felicity, is quite impossible for any modern mind. Nor is there a trace of such division in Jesus Christ as we learn about Him in the Gospels. It is the wonderful humanity of Jesus which reveals His Divinity. The unity of His Person is manifest.

Apart, however, from this consideration, readers of Baron Von Hügel's essay will wonder why he tries to fasten the unpleasant description of patripassianism on those with whom he disagrees. The ancient heretics who were described by this word held that God the Father in person suffered on the Cross. No one would hold such a doctrine now. That is certainly not the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews, nor is it the doctrine to which we have been led in following the guidance of its great teaching. The meaning is that God, the Supreme Being, " for whom are all things and through whom are all things," the source of all created things, does not cut Himself off from His creatures in the isolation of a transcendent joy, or " delectation," to use our critic's word ; but enters into our life, sharing its difficulties and sorrows, helping us in our weakness, and that this universal age-long method of Divine love and Divine greatness found its supreme expression in the life, passion, and death of Christ. As

St. Paul puts it, with such penetrating clearness and brevity, " God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself " (2 Cor. v. 19).

There is certainly in God an ultimate Unity, a Unity which there is reason to believe is a higher degree of Reality than that expressed by the word Person. Can we express this Higher and Ultimate Unity by such a term as Impassibility? Recent discussion of the doctrine of the Impassibility of God has arrived, so far as can be gathered, at no useful result. And surely it is clear that a term which would express a defect in a human being can hardly be adequate to describe a perfection in God. Nor can it be a worthy conception of the Divine Nature in its final quality and essence to regard it as abiding in eternal " delectation," while the creatures, whom its Supreme Power brought into being and so placed in their life on earth that they are beset by temptation, suffering, and sorrow, are struggling upward in spite of all these difficulties. The sympathy which does not enter into the sorrows of its object—if such a thing be possible—would be a mean thing in man. How much more unworthy of the supreme goodness and greatness of God! He " for whom are all things and through whom are all things " cannot be of such a character.

The truth is that, in making positive assertions about the ultimate quality of God's nature, the theologian is going beyond the compass of his faculties and equipment. We can learn about God to some degree from the order of nature; we can learn about Him in a higher degree from our own moral and spiritual being; we can learn about Him in the highest degree from that moral and spiritual nature as we see it exalted in Jesus Christ, so exalted that in Him we discern God "reconciling the world unto himself." Further, we can see that in God there must be an Ultimate Unity which must overcome all the oppositions which, for us, are not reconcilable, passing as they do beyond the limits of our thought. Of this Unity, all we can say is that, as ultimate, it must be the most perfect of all. But of its inner quality no human intelligence can speak without presumption; for here we get only a far-off glimpse of that "light which no man can approach unto."

## CHAPTER XI PRAYER AND SACRAMENT

IT is a question which may well be asked, Has the influence of the theologian been altogether for good? Is it possible that he has made religion too much a matter of theory, too little of practice? The history of the Christian Church is very largely a history of how theological definitions were arrived at, of the fierce controversies they occasioned, of the terrible persecutions which sprang out of those controversies, and of the shattering wars, confusions, desolations which resulted. It was too often the aim of the theologian to make everyone think alike, and not only to think alike, but to express their beliefs in exactly the same terms.

In the story of our Lord's life there is very little theology, though there is abundance of faith and abundance of religion. The teachings He gave about God and human life, and about His own mission, are very simple, though profound in their significance, and in their application to the needs of humanity. He

set forth no creed. He gave indeed a form of prayer involving certain principles, and He impressed upon His hearers the great idea of the Fatherhood of God, which is fundamental in that prayer. He also presented a supreme ideal, the Kingdom of God, the aim of all true living. Further, He adopted, as a prerogative peculiarly His own, an attitude of intimate relationship with God; and, founded on this prerogative, a claim to the complete devotion of His disciples, and a mission to all mankind.

St. Paul and St. John were the first theologians. Inspired by the influence of the wonderful life, they expressed its meaning and purpose for the world by means of language drawn from the current thought of the age in which they lived, an age rich in thought and fertile in expression. But as time went on, and as speculation developed with the growth of the Church, there came an age in which alien elements, from the East mainly, laid hold of the simple faith of Christianity and tried to turn it into a mythical philosophy. It was the age of the Gnostics. And it is certain that the religion of Christ was in sore peril. Then arose the theologians, and there can be no doubt that they saved the purity of the Faith. The

period of definition began. It was inevitable. Subtle forms of paganism, as well as morally degrading teachings, had to be resisted; and these demanded, besides the negative, some positive affirmations. The creeds emerged. And the process which created the creeds added to them. For, within the Church, questions were inevitably raised, erroneous opinions had to be controverted, and further definitions framed. Then were added the terrible anathemas, for in those days no one dreamed that truth could take care of itself.

In their simpler and earlier forms the creeds were a necessary defence against very real dangers. The two Catholic creeds, using this term in its strict sense, the Apostles and the Nicene, remain as witnesses to the Faith of Christianity, in its great central principles, as it has been held from the early days of systematic thought and teaching. What a happy world it would have been if theologians had ceased to demand further authoritative definitions when they had secured the citadel of the Faith! Nor is this an unreasonable supposition, because religion is mainly practice.

Christianity as taught by Christ Himself was certainly more practical than speculative.

He dwelt upon the love and care of God as our Father in Heaven, on the conduct of life, on faith as trust in God, and not much as the acceptance of doctrine. He also dwelt on the importance of doing the will of God and keeping His commandments. He gave wonderful teachings on prayer. He taught loving sympathy with men and women of all kinds, even the most degraded. He set His disciples free from the more rigid rules of ecclesiastical discipline. His teaching on the Sabbath, "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," struck at all spiritual tyranny. These are but a few examples. Never was there a teacher who was so intensely practical.

There are elements in Christian experience which, in all ages, have held their own because of their value and influence as practice rather than for any dogmatic reason. First among these is Prayer. This element in religion is so universal as practice that until the rise of the mechanistic view of natural events no one questioned it. Materialists and Agnostics, ancient and modern, may deny the efficacy of prayer, but pagans and Moslems as well as Christians give it a central place in religion. There was therefore very little reason to dispute about it, or to

construct a theological defence of it. In our day, even on the supposition of unvarying law in the occurrence of natural events, the doctrine of prayer can be maintained without difficulty, because the discovery of the so-called laws of nature, instead of limiting man's power over the forces of nature, has enormously increased that power, and it is absurd to suppose that an order of things which gives man more power in the world must take away the power of God.

Quite apart from such considerations as this, however, prayer holds its own, and will continue to hold its own because as practice it satisfies a universal human need. Face to face with the uncertainties of life, and realising the mystery of the universe, man cries out for help to the great hidden Power that he feels to encompass him. In many lives this cry will be uttered only when some great moral impression is produced, or when, at utmost need, the crust of habitual unbelief or of hardened insensibility to spiritual things is broken through. But with great multitudes prayer remains, in however limited a way, that element in religion to which the soul turns in the time of need as to a real resource.

On the other hand, for those to whom religious faith is an abiding power, prayer is as necessary

as daily bread. Such prayer may not be very systematic, or much linked with thought or meditation, it may not occupy much time among the day's occupations, and nevertheless be as real as any other element in the life. And when it is known and felt as a real experience, it becomes a great resource to which the soul turns at every moment of stress, in every time of felt weakness, as well as in moments of joy and thanksgiving.

It is, then, as practice that prayer commends itself to the heart of man. And it is as practice that Christ Himself commends it. The greatest teaching on prayer ever given is that which forms a part of the Sermon on the Mount, as we have it in St. Matthew's Gospel (Matt. vi. 5 *ff.*). Having given a warning against unreality in prayer, that unreality which attracts public notice, in order to gain credit in the world, our Lord declares the nature of real prayer: "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father." Prayer is the meeting with God in the secret chamber of the heart. It is the soul of man face to face with God in inward communion. And, in that inward communion, the soul is to approach God as Father, "thy Father."

We often think of the Fatherhood of God as the foundation of all Christ's teaching, and there can be no doubt that this is right. It is the first principle from which all else in His teaching springs. But it is not by Him presented as a doctrine to be accepted. It is rather assumed as the basis of all practical religion. So it is here in relation to prayer. And in the Lord's Prayer it comes first, not in dogmatic form, but as the natural form of address to be adopted as the true mode of access by those who seek God in all sincerity of heart. Again in the warning against anxiety in daily life, the same truth appears as simply a fact to be assumed, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." And how completely practical is the application of it!

If the Fatherhood of God is the first principle of Christ's teaching, the Kingdom of God is the second. And here again there is no definition. In saying after saying, in parable after parable, the Kingdom is mentioned. Many aspects are presented, many relations of the Kingdom to human life are indicated; but there is no clear declaration as to what exactly is to be understood by it. Is the Kingdom present, or is it altogether in the great future? Is it the Christian society as actually existing in

the world, the Church, or is it an ideal order to be realised more or less perfectly in human life? Or, as many great scholars have held, does the expression mean simply the rule of God in human life, whether individual or collective. There is no certain answer to any of these questions. Perhaps the true explanation is that our Lord, for great and manifest practical reasons, desired that we should be ever looking up to God and waiting upon Him for the coming of His Kingdom, without enquiring into the form which He may will it to take. Perhaps He withheld all definitions, because He knew how prone religious authorities are to make definitions into iron rules, crushing out the spontaneity of the spiritual life. None knew better than He how such authorities can make void the word of God by their tradition.

The more the teachings of Christ are examined, the more clearly will it appear that He presented the religious life in the form of practice, rather than in the form of theory, or doctrine. We may well discern in this method the Divine wisdom which knew the impossibility of expressing the deeper phases of spiritual experience in abstract doctrinal form. The essence of true prayer, for example, is the

sense of the presence of God. Here language fails utterly. The terms which express the various forms of our knowledge—whether of feelings, of material things, or of human intercourse—are all inadequate or impossible. Yet, for multitudes, this sense of Divine presence is the greatest of all realities. How simply our Lord expresses this experience, "Pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee."[1] The extraordinary simplicity of the language makes all dogmatic interpretations, as to how the soul meets with God and how the Divine presence is realised, impossible. Yet the fact of the meeting with God is clearly declared. God and the soul are together "in secret."

This example suggests the conclusion that all the deeper experiences of relationship to God into which our souls can enter are, most probably, beyond expression in dogmatic terms. Nor should this be surprising. For it is clear that language, and the ideas which it conveys and expresses more or less perfectly, are media which have risen from lowly experiences, and have been adapted to higher things only by the patient labour of millenniums of anxious

[1] It is important to note that the word "openly" after "recompense thee" is not in the best MSS., and is omitted in the R.V.

thought. Plato might refuse to accept this statement as regards those high ideas which he believed to be the eternal possession of the soul in its pristine purity. But the progress of critical thought has certainly shown that ideas as well as language have been sublimated in the course of history.

A notable example is to be found in words which express "spirit," which are nearly all material in origin. And the very history of Greek speculation shows how gradually "spiritual" interpretations of experiences supplanted material explanations. It is true, indeed, that the primitive forms of animism and even of pre-animistic beliefs, attributed a spontaneity like that of the human mind to striking objects. But such thought was very confused, and the early worship of animal gods proves that no distinctively spiritual conceptions had emerged. It is therefore to be expected that the higher spiritual experiences, those which have to do with God and the soul in immediate relationship, are beyond all power of theoretical statement, and can only be known in practice.

We now approach a question which more than any other in the records of Christianity has been the centre of controversy, the sacrament of Holy Communion, the Eucharist. It

is surely the most unhappy thing in the whole history of the Church that this which was intended to be the great bond of union, the means and the expression of Christian fellowship, should become the battle-ground of polemical strife. It is easy to blame the theologians, but who can resist the tendency of his age. Yet the most marvellous feature of the history of Eucharistic doctrine is the length of time which elapsed before any authoritative dogma appeared in the Church. As Harnack points out, the great work of the learned Paschasius Radbert was "the first Church monograph on the subject." In it the essential idea of the doctrine which afterwards came to be called Transubstantiation was first set forth. This writer of the ninth century summed up in dogmatic form the tendencies which had been at work in the Church before and during the age in which he lived; and enforced his doctrine with rare power and learning. Yet it was not by any means received with the assent of the learned. Two able theologians, Ratramnus and Rabanus, led the opposition. But the flowing tide of popular feeling was with Radbert, and his teaching more and more expressed the mind of the age.

The final demonstration of the slowness with which any doctrine of the Sacrament came to be accepted as authoritative in the Church is to be found, however, in the Berengarian controversy. In the eleventh century, two hundred years after Radbert, Berengar of Tours re-opened the discussion. An Augustinian in theology, and possessed of a mind of keen logical power, an enthusiastic believer in the reasonableness of Divine revelation, he disputed the popular doctrine of transmutation. In his time this doctrine was assuming repulsive materialistic forms which were shocking to the educated mind; and his examination led him to the conclusion that it was not only contrary to reason, but inconsistent with Holy Scripture and the teaching of the early doctors of the Church. Openly expressing these views, he came into conflict with Lanfranc, the most influential theologian of the age, and was condemned as a heretic by a council at Rome. And now comes the most extraordinary part of his history. At the Council of Tours in 1054, the papal legate, the famous Hildebrand, afterwards Pope Gregory VII, most mighty champion of the papal authority, heard Berengar state his case, and, satisfied that the doctrine so set forth was not heretical, used his influence

to prevent further action against the daring theologian. Trusting to this protection, Berengar went to Rome; but there found himself surrounded by fierce accusers whose urgency compelled him, by the fear of death, to a recantation, for which afterwards he repented bitterly, and continued to teach the true doctrine as he conceived it. But all this while the controversy was growing in bitterness and disturbing the peace of the Church; and finally Hildebrand, now Pope, summoned him to Rome and was prepared to accept a mediating form of assent; but, finding the opposition too serious, forced upon Berengar another, though milder, recantation. To this the unhappy man submitted, and was kindly dismissed by the Pope with letters of protection, and an anathema on anyone who should call him a heretic. And, again, Berengar's conscience convicted him of an unworthy betrayal of the truth, and once more he recalled his submission; but withdrew into solitude and ended his days in retirement.

It is clear from this pathetic story that the most powerful mind of that age, the great Hildebrand, had no belief in an authoritative doctrine of the nature of Christ's presence in the Sacrament. Indeed, it seems fairly evident

that his intellect was much more inclined to Berengar's opinion than to that of the opposite and popular party. As a statesman and man of action, he was determined not to allow the controversy to rend the Church, but his willingness to accept a mediating statement and his protection of Berengar are notable indications that he did not submit his intelligence to the pressure of popular opinion.

It was at the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, that the doctrine of Transubstantiation was finally and formally accepted as the settled dogma of the Church. Moreover, this dogma was connected in the most intimate way with the fundamental doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, and was with them incorporated in a symbol, or Confession of Faith, by which everyone who questioned the new dogma became an outlaw from the Christian society as then conceived. It was the end of a very long development. But the most interesting, indeed surprising, fact about this development is that, dealing as it did with the very central act of the worship of the Church, it took nearly twelve hundred years to reach its conclusion. The interpretation of this most impressive fact is that the vast multitude of saints and martyrs who witnessed for Christ throughout the heroic

centuries of the early days of Christianity were content to enjoy the benefit of the Sacrament as a matter of experience, and did not find it necessary to express their faith in the form of an authoritative dogma, or to force their own way of speaking of it upon others. Further, it was the challenge of this attempt to dogmatise on the nature of the Sacrament which, more than any other dogmatic element in the current teaching of the mediæval Church, awakened revolt in the minds of thinking men, after the dawning of the fresh light of the Renaissance. The corruptions of the Church urged men to rebellion, the effort to tyrannise over the mind made an irresistible appeal to the intellect of those who, in their search for truth, began to study the Bible and the great literature of the earlier times.[1]

The learned and judicious Richard Hooker, a man of most marvellously balanced mind, when treating of the Sacrament, ventured to express a wish, which he feared some might regard as showing "too great stupidity and dullness," that "men would give themselves more to meditate with silence what we have

[1] On the history of the doctrine, see Harnack; *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (English translation, *History of Dogma*, by N. Buchanan. Published by Williams & Norgate) *passim*. Prof. Harnack treats the whole subject with admirable freedom from theological prejudice.

by the Sacrament, and less to dispute of the manner how." He proceeded then to justify his wish by enquiring "whether the apostles of our Lord themselves have not done the like." In considering this he was led to think of the way in which Christ was received by those who questioned as to how He had crossed the lake as recorded in John vi., and by the disciples who knew. "The one, because they enjoyed not, disputed, the other disputed not, because they enjoyed." So, he thinks, in the early days the spiritual enjoyment of the Sacrament was such that the question "How?" remained masked. It is a profoundly interesting reflection and true to experience. In the further working out of this thought, Hooker finds it necessary to set forth the Roman and Lutheran doctrines, and is able to show that the spiritual experience which Christian Faith has ever found in the Sacrament is independent of all such explanations. And he expresses his own conviction in terms, it would seem, that Berengar would have accepted: "The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought for in the Sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament." But here, it would also seem, that Hooker's argument has led him a little beyond his thesis. Yet we need

not regret the fact, for his discussion of the question has, ever since his time, helped to restrain the wildness of speculation and the fierceness of dogmatism.

After these reflections, let us turn back upon the principle which he lays down, that the benefit of the Sacrament and the enjoyment of it are not dependent on a theory as to "the manner how." The history which we have rapidly reviewed, and the fact that for nearly twelve centuries the Church had no authoritative doctrine of the Sacrament, is conclusive proof that the benefit and the enjoyment are not dependent on dogma. What they really prove is perhaps more perfectly expressed by saying that the truth of the Sacrament is to be found in practice, not in theory. In this it is like prayer. It is also like prayer in this other respect, that it has to do with the most sublime and inscrutable of all things within our experience—the relation of the human soul to God. When the soul, seeking God, shuts out the world, and reaches out towards the Father who is "in secret," there is certainly an experience unlike all other experiences, the consciousness of the presence of God. The psychologist may try to explain this consciousness; but the experience is certainly a thing

by itself, which, for those who have had it, carries its credentials with it.[1] It is, moreover, a vast experience, a world-wide experience, conditioned no doubt by the convictions and traditional creed of him who has it, and gaining in wealth and meaning in accordance with the value of the conception of God which those convictions involve. But these thoughts of God's nature, while they qualify the experience itself, supply no theory of its *modus operandi*.

So it is with the experience which Christians enjoy in the Sacrament. Here is another means of entering into relation with God. It is fundamentally Christian. It depends upon certain convictions about Christ: His relation to God, His revelation of God, His humanity, His work for mankind, His passion and death, His resurrection. All these, as the supreme manifestation of the love of God, are expressed in the Sacrament. God in Christ enters thus intimately into the life of man. Such is the experience. As experience it is, like the meeting with God in prayer, incapable of expression in human language.

[1] *La Prière, Étude de Psychologie Religieuse*, by Prof. J. Segond (Paris; Librairie Félix Alcan), is a valuable study of the psychology of prayer. But, in the writer's opinion, it does not take sufficient account of the influence of belief as to the nature of God. The book is, however, the most thorough-going examination of the psychological elements involved.

Further consideration will show that there are many things in ordinary human life which are incapable of expression in language. They cannot be subjected to the conceptual framework of thought, and therefore no words can be found to express them. Such are indeed all our dearest experiences: friendship, the confidence which exists between two friends who trust one another utterly, the love of husband and wife united in true marriage, the affection of parent for child and of child for parent. We use language to indicate these things, but no language can really express them, nor can any concept of thought include their true essence.

All these instances have to do with the relationship between persons. Such relationship passes, in some mysterious way, the gulf which separates soul from soul. We know, by means of an interpretation of our experience which we cannot question, that we can trust our friend, that the love of our dearest ones is real, and worthy of the best response we can make to it, but we cannot prove these things. We have no means by which to penetrate into the inner being of another and test feelings and qualities of character. And, further, the expression of these inner qualities in the grasp

of the hand or the glance of the eye convey profound significances of affection and regard, and yet we are wholly unable to express the relation between these outward manifestations and the inner qualities in conceptual terms.

These things are not unworthy of being taken as illustrations of the relations between God and man which are expressed and effected in the Sacrament. Our Lord Himself uses them as figures to convey the very highest meanings. So it is in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The love of God, poured out upon the repentant sinner, is expressed by the most moving picture of paternal affection and forgiveness. "While he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him," and then, most significantly, follows the feast of gladness and reconciliation. No concepts which we can form, or language of explanation that we can use, can analyse this into theoretic form. To attempt such analysis would be profanation. Even as a human thing, it passes far beyond such treatment. But when we regard it, as it is presented in our Lord's teaching, as an expression of the love of God poured out upon the soul which turns to Him, the impossibility of such explanation becomes more startlingly evident.

Above all other realities of which we have any knowledge, this belongs to experience, the experience which faith illumines, and not to doctrine.

Now, so it is surely with the Sacrament. It can be known in experience, in practice : it can be enjoyed as the divinely appointed means of most intimate relationship with God : it can bring the living Saviour who died for us into most vital union, and so be the perpetual witness of His work of salvation. Yet all such language must be essentially inadequate, because here we have to do with that which passes beyond the bounds of all our analytic thought and conceptual expression. The best of such phrases are but poetic language playing round a truth too great in itself for all that we can utter.

It is perhaps necessary to add that the sacramental elements which are found in primitive and pagan religions, and which some devout minds find disturbing, as though suggesting that the Christian Sacrament is but the survival of an ancient superstition, are in truth a witness to the existence of a universal need. Religion is not the less vital because it tends to take up into itself those elements in human life which are fundamental. The social meal was from

the beginning the inevitable expression of fellowship. The washing with water was the means of cleansing. One of the most Divine of all the Divine things in Christianity is the manner in which it lays hold upon the simple essential elements of human life and consecrates them to the highest and holiest purposes.

## CHAPTER XII THE ASCENT OF THOUGHT

THE advance in scientific conceptions which has been so very notable in recent years has been marked by two opposite but related features: a fuller grasp of the facts of the physical order of the world, and a greatly increased emphasis on the mental apprehension of those facts. Newton conceived the universe as contained in infinite space and infinite time, both regarded as ultimately real in the form in which his postulates assumed them. It is now recognised that space and time, thus conceived, are not ultimate realities, but rather abstractions which provide a convenient framework by means of which the motions of material things can be reduced to a systematic statement which, within very wide limits, corresponds to the facts revealed by observation.

Increase in the power of scientific observation, whether of the great stellar universe on the one hand, or of the minute structure of matter on the other, has shown that these limits have been passed, and that the Newtonian framework

is no longer sufficient. It remains, within its proper limits, a marvellously effective mode of expression and calculation, but, for greater things and wider generalisations, another framework must be provided. Using the results and methods of Fitzgerald, Gauss, Riemann, Lorentz, and the experiments of Michelson, Morley, and others, Einstein has been able to present to the world another framework, far more comprehensive in scope, and corresponding to the wider range of scientific observation. It is an amazing achievement, and one which may well fill us with astonishment as a proof of the capacity of the human mind.

There is nothing to prove that Einstein's framework, any more than Newton's, is the last possible way of presenting the truth about the order of the physical world. The natural inference is quite otherwise. If Newton's way of presenting the observed facts has proved insufficient, and has been merged in a wider statement, it seems likely that Einstein's mode of presenting the constitution of the physical world will some day give place to something more comprehensive still. With this speculation we need not trouble ourselves. What is of moment for our notice is that those who have mastered the doctrine of Relativity have come

to see in it an amazing simplification of scientific thought. Things that formerly seemed to stand apart unreconciled are now seen to be consistent. The physical universe is far more " of a piece " than it used to be, for scientific explanation. And, this being so, we may well believe that there must, in the last resort, far beyond our attainment, be a point of view from which the whole of reality, in all its forms and degrees, is a consistent and self-explanatory unity.

These things are a parable. Like science, the religions of the world show a continuous advance. If it be true that man began with belief in a mysterious " mana," or potency, in the things round about him in the world of his observation, and then advanced to a purer animism, finding at first vague spiritual powers in striking objects, and then identifying these with animals whose power or dangerous qualities impressed him, then rising to the thought of deities with human form, all the while cultivating ritual usages connected more or less with these beliefs, it is clear that the whole long history shows a definite advance from cruder conceptions to those of higher quality. If the history of science shows an Ascent of Thought, the history of religion shows an Ascent of Faith.

When considering how man arrived at his belief

in God, we followed the course of this progress of Faith until we saw how the monotheistic creed to which the great prophets witnessed overthrew the heathenism which threatened to overwhelm the religious life of Israel. We have also seen how the revelation of God in history culminated in the Person of Christ.

It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that this climax in the Person of Christ put an end to the upward movement. For the Christian revelation stirred the mind as well as the heart of man. It was inevitably followed by a long succession of efforts to think out the tremendous problems which came to light. The history of Christian theology shows how earnestly the solution of these problems was pursued by minds of great power. In the earlier Christian ages, the Incarnation was the centre round which controversy gathered. The Nicene Creed, as we call it, presents the result of these great discussions, as regards the more fundamental questions. Here, and not in that which unhappily bears his name, we find especially the influence of Athanasius, whose thought shaped the expression of the doctrine which the mind of Christendom came to regard as the essential Faith.

After Athanasius, the leading influence in

the formation of Christian thought was Augustine. In him a mind of extraordinary power and affluence gave itself to the problems which concern the relationship of God and man. The dogma of original sin and the problems of will, predestination, and Divine grace are fundamental in his theology, which proved the most potent agency in the shaping of mediæval thought, and in the Protestant Confessions of Faith of the Reformation period. The influences which sprang from it were of a hardening quality, to which is due the rigidity of much modern theology.

In our time other influences have been at work, and the hard shell of theological prejudice has been softened. A great volume of kindly humanitarian feeling, nourished by the democratic tendencies of modern life, and spreading more widely the call to sympathy with the suffering, the needy, the ignorant, and the oppressed, has reacted on our thoughts of God. Also, the life of Jesus has been studied in a more human way: it has been realised that His mind was by no means that of the hard-shelled theologian. His love was poured out on the poor and stricken, on the publicans and sinners: His hardest words were for the proud, domineering churchman.



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Further, the critical examination of the New Testament documents has shown that they are not to be regarded as oracles of which every word bears a definite theological significance; but that they witness in a human and natural way to the wonderful life of Him who is indeed the Light of the World. A consequence of this is a new discernment that the teaching of Jesus is not to be rigidly construed as if it conveyed scientific statements, but as the highest truths of the spiritual order expressed, as He himself constantly affirmed, in the language of parable.

Side by side with this growing humanity of outlook must be placed the effect upon our thoughts about the unseen world which the scientific view of the universe has produced. We can no longer think of the sky as a dome covering our habitation, the earth, and of heaven as a more splendid realm of being above that dome. It is true that centuries have passed since this conception was possible to the educated mind, but it has survived in the popular imagination, in hymns, in pictures, and in the language of common discourse, to our own day. It is probably true that a large majority of those who now bear the Christian name in all parts of the world think and speak,

even to-day, as if this crude view of the world were a literal fact. The average mind is intensely materialistic, and finds a more spiritual conception very difficult of apprehension.

The result is that heaven is thought of as a magnificent imperial court, in which the Almighty is enthroned in surpassing splendour. There the gold crowns and white raiment of the apocalyptic vision are actually existent. There the song of praise to the Supreme Being rises from myriad choirs, and will rise to all eternity. There the awfulness of the Divine Presence overwhelms all His subjects. There power unimaginable and majesty inaccessible are felt in their tremendous, their crushing immensity.

Imagery of this kind is perhaps inevitable, possibly of real value, as a means of conveying truth ; but when it is regarded as a description of literal fact, its effect is to create an impression of the nature of God which is not in agreement with the teaching of Christ. Our Lord does not in His teaching present a thought of God as so exalted in His awfulness and power as to be unapproachable by us. On the contrary, His purpose is to teach us to think of God as always accessible, and immediately accessible, to the simplest, humblest of human

beings who seek Him. The greatest of all such teachings, in its power of appeal to the heart, is the parable of the Prodigal Son. God is represented as a Father so watchful in His love that He is ready and waiting for the return of His sinful child. Again, in the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, God is the Father who knows all our need and is ever ready to provide for it. He is merciful, and kind to the unthankful and the evil. In prayer, we are to address Him as "our Father." This is certainly the characteristic teaching of our Lord about God. There are indeed very strong utterances about Divine judgment upon sin, but it is strange to observe that the most tremendous acts of such judgment are attributed to the Son and not directly to the Father. That the mind and will of God are set in the strongest opposition to every form of evil is clear. This is the force of that expression, "the wrath of God." But there is no warrant for the theological implication which has been found in these words, that God's love is so alienated from sinful man that it has to be won back by some great act of intervention. There is no ground for the idea that the Atonement effects a changing of the mind of God from hostility to kindness. There is no reconciling of God to us, as some

of our theological statements affirm.[1] In St. Paul's words, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." And of the Christian ministry he writes, "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." And all this is expressed in the single sentence of the Fourth Gospel, "God so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son." Jesus Christ as the expression of the love of God, in His life, teaching, death, and resurrection, has power to bring home that love with such effectiveness to the heart of man as to change completely its relation to God. Here we may perhaps find the essential fact of the Atonement. If we could grasp in its fullness the nature of Divine love, the whole meaning of Atonement might stand revealed.

It appears, then, that Christian thought has not yet ascended to the full height of the revelation of the nature of God which we find in Christ. Among more primitive peoples, there is everywhere such fear of divine wrath, or even of divine capriciousness, that there must

[1] The Second Article asserts that Christ "truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile His Father to us." It is surely possible to interpret these words as expressing the "wrath of God," the reaction of God's holiness and justice, against evil. The old saying that "God hates sin but loves the sinner" conveys the truth in a very simple way.

be continual effort to appease the angry or capricious powers. If the deity is not constantly pleased by sacrifice or offering, he will punish the negligence of his worshippers as an affront. The very same way of regarding God may be traced in much modern religion. Yet psalmists and prophets of the Old Testament discerned the error. "Thinkest thou that I will eat bull's flesh or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the Most High." "Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it. Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalm li.). "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats" (Isa. i. 11). "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He

hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 7, 8).

In considering such teaching as this, we must observe a due proportion in the correspondence of ideas with practice. We cannot forget that the costly sacrifices of primitive times corresponded with the conceptions of God's nature which belonged to those times. The man who gave his "fed beast" made a real sacrifice, and showed how deeply he was impressed with the duty of giving to God. That was undoubtedly a religious act of great significance. We dare not despise it. But when the conception of God's nature rose to higher levels of spiritual apprehension, the finer insight came, and it was realised that the sacrifices which God desired, the offerings which correspond to His real nature, are spiritual, not material. Material things may indeed be given to God, but always as the expression of the spiritual gift, which is the only sacrifice truly acceptable to Him who is Spirit. In the psalms and the prophets we can watch the transition from the lower level to the higher.

When we reach the New Testament, we find ourselves in an atmosphere in which the lower

conceptions have become impossible. So St. Peter, writing of the new order of things, and comparing it with the old, says, "Ye . . . are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter ii. 5). And so St. Paul, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable (or spiritual) service." The body, with all its living powers, given to the service of God is a spiritual, not a material, sacrifice.

The higher thoughts of God to which we have been led by the influences mentioned above have brought many blessings in their train. For example, we have learned to look with more sympathetic and understanding eyes on peoples of other races and creeds. It is confessed now at the great conferences where missionaries of various Christian Churches assemble for consultation, that it is altogether wrong to regard the beliefs of the great peoples of the East, for example, as altogether evil. In the Middle Ages every religion but Christianity was held to be the work of demons. Now the Christian missionary looks for the elements of good, and finds many of them. Even the African animist,

low in the scale though his ideas are, yet possesses that first essential element of a true faith, belief in unseen spiritual powers, which, when purified and elevated, enables him to rise to the glorious Faith in One Supreme Good and Holy God, which scatters, like the rising of the sun, the dark and terrible shadows of his hereditary creed.

In further illustration of how the nobler thoughts of God to which we have been able to attain have helped us to better things, consider how the belief in God's all-embracing love has enabled us to get rid of the dread belief in a flaming hell to which the vast majority of mankind were thought to be destined. It is not so long since the pious Christian of every denomination was taught to believe that all but a certain select number, whether of true believers or of faithful members of the one true Church, all heathen, all Moslems, all the poor toiling multitudes absorbed in the struggle for daily bread and careless of their souls, all thinking people who find belief difficult, all heretics, all worldly folk, would be most certainly consigned to never-ending torment.

It is certainly possible to infer this doctrine from certain passages in the New Testament, and especially in the teaching of our Lord,

when the language of parable is interpreted in a literal way. But, in this very interpretation, it was forgotten that the most tremendous parable of all, that of the Sheep and the Goats, presents the final decision as depending entirely on moral, and not on theological, grounds, and that the justified are chosen from "all the nations." Also St. Paul, writing of the virtues of "the Gentiles"—that is, the non-Jewish and non-Christian peoples—says that when "they do by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." Here is very splendid doctrine: conscience revealing the law written in the heart, even in the heart of the heathen, enabling them to do righteously and stand the scrutiny of Divine judgment. It agrees perfectly with the teaching of our Lord's great parable of judgment. But it is needless to reason out at any length a question which attracted so much attention a generation ago, and on which every enlightened mind has now decided against the accepted view of former times.

The real force of our modern denial of the older doctrine is our heightened sense of the nature of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, our firm conviction that it is impossible to believe that He whose very nature is love can commit multitudes of His sensitive creatures, weak as they are, and erring though they be, to an eternity of torment. This cannot be, even though it be admitted that a will finally set against good must be incapable of redemption. We must surely hold that the all-embracing love of God will finally break down all opposing barriers of hardened evil and complete His New Creation.

## CHAPTER XIII THE LORD'S PRAYER AND MODERN THOUGHT

THE Lord's Prayer is the only form of words presented for use and acceptance among the disciples of Jesus Christ with His authority and command. It is the only original Christian formulary.

The simplicity of its language is as remarkable as the wealth of thought which it is capable of suggesting to the mind. The order of its petitions is as suggestive as the petitions themselves. Both order and petitions are elemental in their meaning and quality.

Contrary to the natural impulse of the heart of man, the prayer begins with heaven and then descends to earth. It puts God and His purposes first, man and his needs second. In this it is in perfect agreement with the rule of life set forth by our Lord for the guidance of all human workers, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you." The satisfaction of needs, both temporal and spiritual, is dependent upon, and conditioned

by, the higher purposes of the Will of God. Yet the very first words proclaim a kinship between God and man: "Our Father which art in heaven."

Springing from this source there are three petitions concerning God and His purposes: "Hallowed be thy Name," a prayer that great thoughts of God may fill the soul of man; "Thy Kingdom come," a prayer that the supreme purpose may be fulfilled; "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," a prayer that human life may be brought into conformity with the purpose of God. St. Luke, it seems, omits this third petition, and indeed it may be regarded as an expansion of the second. Then follow three petitions for human needs: one for daily bread, a second for pardon of sin, emphasised with a condition, a third for deliverance from the besetting evils of life. How simple, how practical, how remote from theological speculation all this is, yet how profound in its implications!

The most wonderful thing about the Lord's Prayer is, perhaps, this, that it has no association, in the terms and structure of it, with any special people or place, or with any period in the history of thought. God as our Father, the reverence due to Him, His Kingdom, or rule,

daily bread, sin, temptation—these are the elements of the prayer, and there is nothing to connect them with anything especially Jewish, or Greek, or Latin. They are neither Eastern, nor Western, neither ancient nor modern. They are simply human. Therefore, it is clear their meaning and value for the soul of man remains unaffected by the passage of the ages.

Further, it is the experience of all the Christian centuries that this simple prayer possesses a singular capacity to include within its scope all the needs of human life and all special petitions which the soul seeking God may desire to offer. There have been devout souls who, in their private converse with God, seldom used any other form of words. Here they found ample space for all thoughts, desires, and purposes that they felt impelled to lay before Him.

If all this is true, it may well be asked, why then deal with the Lord's Prayer in relation to Modern Thought? There is some reason in the question, because, in a practical way, the application of the prayer to the needs of our own time are strikingly obvious. Yet the historical setting of the prayer, as we find it in the New Testament, is so different from the

modern world that a more particular examination of its petitions in relation to modern ideas and modern problems may prove useful.

The simple words "Our Father" imply a doctrine of God and a doctrine of man. The former teaches us to think of God in terms of human relationship. It takes the most fundamental fact of man's life—the derivation of his existence from another, as a symbol of higher things. From this higher point of view, we owe our being to God, and not merely as created creatures, but as those whose derivation from Him involves kinship. From Him we draw spiritual powers which, though less than His, are yet of like nature, as a son or daughter possesses faculties of the same sort as those which belong to the parents. That is, God, who knows and wills and loves, is the source of that in us which is capable of knowledge, will, and love. God is not an unknowable mystery; He is not a blind force; He is not so far above us as to be wholly unlike us in the nature of His powers.

And this is a reasonable view of His nature, because this world of which He is the Creator is not alien. It is our home. We do not know all its meanings, but we know enough to feel that it is our proper dwelling-place. We can

use it, and live in it, and subdue many of its forces and various contents to our service. Our Great Father is above us, He is our "Father in heaven," yet He is not too remote to care for us, and to provide for us.

Further, the words which teach us about God teach us also about man. If the Great Creator permits us to approach Him as Father, it means that He recognises us as children. It is the greatest possible exaltation of our manhood. Also it is noteworthy that this doctrine of man's relation to God grows with the advance of our education as moral beings. In primitive societies the father is often more feared than loved. Even in highly civilised communities, the right of a father over his children was often such as to be tyrannous; and sometimes it became cruel, as with the Romans of the classical period. Under the influence of Christianity, affection gradually took the place of legal authority, and the word "father" came, more and more, to convey tender relationships of love and confidence. Thus the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God created for itself, by the effect of constant suggestion, a significance ever growing in purity and moral beauty. For us to-day, as the outcome of this long process, the thought of God as "Our Father" stirs our

hearts to faith and love. It sums up the great revelation of God in Christ.

The doctrine of man which thus emerges expresses his spiritual nature, both individually and socially. "Pray to thy Father" was the teaching of our Lord for the individual soul at prayer. And this exhortation springs from the very idea of fatherhood; for a father cares for his children individually. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." The infinite value of the individual soul in the sight of God, so wonderfully expressed, in such words as these, is implied in the very word "Father" as addressed to God in His relation to man. The single soul is of such a nature as to be above price even in the sight of God. That is, every individual possesses a spiritual nature derived from God and the object of His care.

Socially also the address "Our Father" brings man into close relationship with God. We approach Him as members of His family, and therefore brothers and sisters one of another. The Fatherhood of God, when thus expressed, implies the brotherhood of man. Thus from its very beginning the prayer draws the whole human family into fellowship. We may truly

affirm this as being in the mind of Christ for all human beings, for does He not say, "Be sons of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." And certainly the family of God is meant to embrace all members of the human race. No one is excluded by race, colour, or past unworthiness.

Thus, by ascending to heaven and viewing mankind from that sublime altitude, the prayer brings all human beings, individually and socially, into relationship with God and with one another. We gain a world-wide view which prepares us to approach God with the petitions which are most of all in accordance with His nature and purpose: "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The last words emphasise the world-wide outlook.

The Name of God stands for that expression of the Nature of God to which, by any means, man may have attained. To pray that the Name may be hallowed is to pray that a true knowledge of God and a due reverence towards Him may be granted to mankind. It is a prayer for the knowledge of the truth, for all truth is, in its degree, a revelation of God. And

reverence for truth, and a sincere seeking of it, are a real exaltation of Him. This must be so, because, if our knowledge were made perfect, we should see all things in God : we should see that all true science and all sound philosophy have their place in the great Divine Name and are partial revelations of God. In this age of knowledge and of ignorance, this age of certainties penetrated by doubts, it is good to pray for some higher degree of that revelation of truth which, in its perfection, would make all things clear.

If the first of these three petitions seeks for the knowledge of God as apprehended both by head and heart, the second seeks the great end which forms the ideal of all true living. If the first belongs to the contemplative side of religion, the second belongs mainly to the practical. The Kingdom in the teaching of our Lord is, in the first instance, best defined as the rule of God in human life, whether individual or social. As we saw in a former chapter, our Lord Himself nowhere defines it. He uses the phrase in His teaching, and, as He proceeds, its meaning seems to change and grow, to contract and expand, to be an internal principle and an external order. It certainly gains a social content which has made it the

inevitable expression of all that we set before ourselves as an ideal of the perfect order for human life. Yet it must not be imagined that the Kingdom of God is some inconceivably perfect condition of existence altogether in the future. The great ideal has already received a partial realisation. The Kingdom of God is among us. It is, on the one hand, the Divine idea which is even now guiding the process of the ages: it is, on the other, actually, though imperfectly, existing in the concrete social and religious life of this world of ours. We pray that it may come, not implying that it is now non-existent, but that it may advance to its perfection until at last the Divine purpose is completely fulfilled.

The third petition descends from this splendid vision of the ideal to the great rule for all practical life, both for the race and for the individual. Only so far as the will of man is brought into harmony with the Will of God can any true advance take place towards the realisation of God's purpose. He seeks for the willing obedience of children, not for the service of machines. His Kingdom can come only through that love which will make His children, in free self-surrender, identify their wills with His Will; when they live, not for themselves,

but for the Kingdom. "Seek ye first the Kingdom" is the highest rule of conduct.

Turning back in thought on the whole meaning of the earlier portion of the prayer, and endeavouring to grasp its outlook upon life, we discern that, while implying the unique worth of the individual, its aim is mainly social. It presents before God the whole human family as the object of His regard, and the first theme in our supplications. The bringing of all humanity into such relationship with God that His supreme purpose in man and for man may be accomplished is all contained in the simple words of the first petitions. And all is summed up in the thought of God and His Kingdom.

The effectiveness of Christianity in relation to the characteristic problems of the modern world is mainly due to its way of presenting these very conceptions. The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of Man, the Kingdom of God as a social organism, the organic relation of God and man as expressed in the Incarnation —these are the elements of doctrine which have appealed most to our age. The social aspect of human existence has been the dominating principle of all the movements which have brought about better conditions of life, and provision for the sick, the suffering, the needy.

When we translate these things into abstract terms they lose much of their power. As they appear in the teaching of our Lord and in the brief language of His prayer, they are just these simple but profound ideas: God the Father of all, our response to His love, His purpose of blessing for the world, our doing of His Will.

Even among many who do not consciously realise these ideas, it will be found that they have become practically effective. Politics have been socialised to an extraordinary degree. The problems which excite the keenest interest are social. Careful economists are ready to take gigantic risks if they can but see their way to the solution of these problems. An almost religious fervour animates the student of social conditions. We have become zealots for sanitation, housing, education, and all that we realise as common good.

So, again, within the Christian Church, the social nature of the Gospel of Christ and its world-wide outlook have been more fully realised than in former times. The modern movement towards Christian re-union is instinct with the consciousness of both principles. God and His Kingdom and His Will for man are all unifying in their nature. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye were called in

one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. iv. 4–6). It is St. Paul's expression of the truth which inspires the whole prayer. More and more, in spite of great difficulties, the duty of seeking a united Christian Church is pressing upon the hearts of Christian men of all kinds.

And as it is in connection with the organised life of the various Christian communions, so it is in relation to their enterprise in the mission-field. A truly prophetic insight into the meaning and necessity of missionary effort has been given to many faithful souls in our day. The great commission of our Lord to His Church has sounded with new power and emphasis in the ears of His people ; and the Lord's Prayer has been revealed as the greatest of all missionary prayers. This prayer of prayers puts into the forefront of all its utterances, not one, but three missionary petitions : " Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." Before the prayer for daily bread, and before the prayer for pardon, come the prayers for the extension of the knowledge of God, for the advancement of His Kingdom, and for the world-wide doing of His Will. These things are being at last understood, and the

Church is awakening to a sense of her duty, and is giving, in apparent recognition at all events, a place of paramount importance to the missionary cause.

When we descend from the heights to which the first part of the prayer carries us, we find ourselves confronted with the needs of our human life. And first we present to God a petition for the constant supply for that urgent, clamorous bodily need on which our existence from day to day depends. This is perhaps the force of the unusual word, meaning "bread for the coming day," which is translated "daily." It is indeed noteworthy that this petition comes before those for spiritual benefits. Is it not an instance of the Divine common sense of Jesus that He recognised, even in this prayer, that man must have the means of life before he can rise to other things? And yet he must have these means as the gift of God, and therefore in accordance with the Will of God. There is no sanction here for the doctrine maintained by some casuists that the obligations arising from man's nature have precedence of those arising from the revealed Will of God. And it is to be observed that the social point of view adopted in the first words of the prayer is carried on even into those petitions which are offered for things

so definitely individual, to all appearance, as daily bread and the forgiveness of sin. A deeper insight shows that we have here the mark of a great truth, the truth that no man lives or sins to himself alone. He is, even in these things, a social being, a member of the community.

So far the Lord's Prayer omits all direct reference to the subject which is often presented as though it were the whole of religion, sin and the remedy for it. No doubt, the Great Teacher intended to lift our thoughts above the lower and more individual point of view, and so began with God's glory, and then descended to man's need. It is worthy of note that, as the prayer goes on, the need of man becomes more and more prominent, until it reaches its most intense expression in the cry : " Deliver us from the evil." This is the only " cry " in the whole prayer, the only place where calm reserve of utterance is broken through, and there is a touch of pain, almost of agony.

The last petitions deal with the awful problem of evil, with that which forms the great obstacle to all that has been prayed for hitherto. If God's Name is to be hallowed, His Kingdom to come, His Will to be done, then evil must be overcome and destroyed. The petitions which

touch this tremendous subject ask for pardon for past sin and deliverance from evil in the future. The prayer for forgiveness is notable in two ways. First there is an urgent personal quality enforced by the added condition. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." These last words drive the soul back upon itself with the question, Have I indeed forgiven those who injured me? Have I thrust all hatred and personal resentment out of my heart? Here is the demand for self-examination.

At the same time, there is no part of the prayer which presents more impressively than this petition the social nature of man. We are compelled to think of the sin of our own lives as a common evil. The true penitent must turn back upon his relation with his neighbours when the burden of his sin makes him seek Divine forgiveness. Thus the pardon of the individual becomes a blessing for the whole community. We learn, too, that forgiveness is no mere "letting off" of the sinner. It must go far deeper than that. It is the Divine reception of the sinner into that realm of love in which the common evil, so far as the individual is concerned, is dissolved in the sunshine of God's favour. It is the taking of the

child back into the Divine family when his heart has been cleansed from the antagonisms of sin by willing surrender to that love which is God.

In all this is implied the true nature of social community. In the teaching of our Lord the individual never loses his identity, his liberty, his responsibility. There is a type of thought now current which reduces the individual to a mere element in the community. The Christian Ethic does not sanction this doctrine. A true community is a fellowship in which the common good is to be attained through the free and willing service of all. Love, not compulsion, is the essential moral principle of Christianity. And love is the giving of self in free surrender. All this is implied everywhere in the teaching and example of our Lord, as here in His prayer. God knows and loves His great family as a whole : He also knows and loves each member of it so well that the very hairs of their heads are numbered.

The last petition makes evil a tremendous reality. In our time there is a widely spread tendency to regard evil too leniently. On the scientific side, the idea of evolution has been used to make it appear that what we call evil is only a past stage in development ; and, in a

more popular way, there is, in much recent literature, a presentation of evil which makes it a necessary part of experience, a yielding to natural impulse without which life is incomplete. After all, this modern doctrine is only the old idea of tasting life, sowing wild oats, feasting on the passionate joys of youth while the brief years of fresh powers endure. It is the lure which, however justified, has in every age ensnared the careless and the wilful. It is the false light which has strewn the shores of life with unnumbered wrecks. To-day, as at any time during past ages, the petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil," expresses the final and most imperative need of the soul of man.

One last reflection on the Lord's Prayer enables us to see in its method the answer to most of the questions which have been raised by modern thinkers in criticism of prayer in general. Christ teaches us to adopt, when we approach God in prayer, before all others, the Divine point of view. God, the reverence due to Him, His Kingdom, His Will—these come first. We have seen that this implies that we are to think of all truth as the revelation of God, of all good purposes as seeking His Kingdom, of all right living as the doing of His

Will. And, because these things come first, the world, our need, the mystery of evil, are to be regarded in the light of God's countenance.

Once this point of view is adopted, all the most serious intellectual perplexities which beset the subject of prayer vanish. For prayer is not the effort to bring God's mind and will into agreement with our mind and will: it is the bringing of our mind and will into agreement with His mind and will. When our prayer expresses the mind of God it must meet with its answer. And thus we discern that the Lord's Prayer is most truly offered in the Name of Christ, though the customary form has never been added, because it is impossible to adopt the spiritual attitude represented by the first three petitions without entering into the spirit of Him, the ruling principle of whose life was, "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God."

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